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Missile found at Aden airport

ADEN (AP) — Airport authorities in the southern port city of Aden discovered a missile aimed at the passenger lounge earlier this week, security sources said Saturday. Airport employees, taxi drivers and others at the airport were rounded up after the device was discovered Wednesday, said the sources, who did not want to be identified further. They said security officials believe it was a sabotage attempt by followers of the exiled national opposition front. The sources did not give details of the missile, or say how it was to be fired. Sophisticated missiles can be fired by remote control. Yemen, an impoverished country of about 15 million in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, has witnessed a civil war and sporadic unrest since the northern and southern parts of the country were united in 1990.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تيمز يومية مستقلة تصدر عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأى



Hizbollah attacks Israeli patrol

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — The Iranian-backed Hizbollah on Saturday attacked an Israeli patrol in South Lebanon but caused no casualties, said the radio of Israel's proxy militia the South Lebanon Army (SLA). The attack with automatic weapons and anti-tank missiles took place at Beit Yahoun, in the central sector of the Israeli-occupied "security zone" in South Lebanon, said the radio. A Hizbollah spokesman in Beirut claimed the attack, saying it caused casualties among Israeli ranks. On Thursday Israeli warplanes raided Hizbollah positions near Baalbek in Lebanon's Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley only hours before the five-nation truce monitoring committee held its first meeting. The raids came after a 20-year-old Israeli Sergeant Tehauhu Aslan was killed Tuesday and two other troops lightly hurt in a Hizbollah mortar attack on the western sector of the "security zone".

Volume 21 Number 6296

AMMAN SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 1996, RABI I, 26, 1417

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Government and Parliament deadlocked over bread price

Decision expected after King's Saudi visit accompanied by Kabariti
Legislative committee wants Lower House vote on proposals

By Tareq Al Momani
and P.V.Vivekanand

AMMAN — Negotiations between the government and Parliament remained deadlocked on Saturday over a proposed increase in the price of bread and restructuring the subsidy system after both sides refused to budge from their respective positions.

A Royal Decree was issued meanwhile endorsing a set of recommendations by the Council of Ministers concerning subsidies for wheat and fodder.

Signs earlier in the day indicated that the dispute between the legislative and executive authorities over the price of bread was solved, and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti announced the new prices and a system of indirect compensation to protect the needy from the impact of the hikes.

But, after a meeting later in the day between Mr. Kabariti and a parliamentary committee charged with handling the issue, it emerged that the two sides could not reach agreement.

Informed sources said a final decision on the issue was expected to be taken only after His Majesty King Hussein returns from a visit to Saudi Arabia beginning today. Mr. Kabariti will accompany the King on the visit.

In his meeting with the committee from the Lower House of Parliament at his residence, Mr. Kabariti presented the government's views and proposed new prices of Arabic and other types of bread. But the committee members refused to accept the proposals and insisted on its own recommendations which were earlier submitted to the government; and thus the deadlock.

In remarks after the meeting, Samir Habashneh, chairman of the committee, said discussions with the govern-

ment on the issue would continue, but stressed that the panel would not budge from its position.

Mr. Habashneh said the panel also insisted that its recommendations be put to vote in the full House.

The committee has offered two options:

— Setting a price of 130 fils for a kilogramme of Arabic bread, up from the present 85 fils, and the government will pay direct cash compensation only to beneficiaries of the National Aid Fund.

— Setting a price of 150 fils a kilogramme of Arabic bread, and the government will pay direct cash compensation to all those who are entitled to subsidy coupons under the system in force at present for sugar, rice and powdered milk.

In contrast, the government proposed setting a price of 180 fils a kilogramme of Arabic bread and 220 fils for other types of bread and direct compensation of JD 1.28 per head per month to every Jordanian.

In a meeting held in Irbid with heads of local councils, Mr. Kabariti announced the new prices, but the Jordan News Agency, which carried the prime minister's comments, later withdrew the report.

The increase in prices of bread was warranted by a hike in the international prices of wheat that skyrocketed the deficit in the fiscal budget to around JD 150 million so far this year. If the situation continued unchanged, according to estimates, subsidies could be close to JD 200 million by the end of the year.

This would in turn pose serious question marks on the economic restructuring programme that Jordan is following in agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Bread was specifically targeted for an increase in prices because, officials

point out, it is a commodity which is being smuggled out heavily. A considerable amount of bread is also wasted, with many livestock breeders opting to feed their animals with bread.

The parliamentary committee handling the question of subsidies for bread is placing the issue as a priority item for discussion at a session of the House on Wednesday. The committee is hoping that 24 deputies who are boycotting the session over a related controversy would attend the session and that vote could effectively end the dispute with the government.

However, Mr. Kabariti, replying to questions raised by deputies in earlier House sessions on the issue, has said that the government was not bound by Parliament's decisions on the issue in view of the provisions in the Constitution and related legislation adopted in 1992 place such matters under the direct jurisdiction of the executive authority.

Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Saturday that the government would also reduce customs duties on sugar and rice imports to one per cent from five per cent in a bid to encourage private sector imports of the commodities.

The government has already decided to end the monopoly of the Ministry of Supply on imports of sugar, wheat and powdered milk.

The issue of subsidy has been turned into a political tug-of-war between the government and opposition deputies in Parliament, mainly the Islamic Action Front (IAF) party.

IAF deputies have said they would like to call a confidence vote on the government over the issue although such a motion cannot be entertained in the current session of Parliament since the Royal Decree which called the

(Continued on page 7)



ULSTER MARCH: Protestant Apprentice Boys march across the Craigavon Bridge into Londonderry on Monday to be greeted by a sculpture depicting the Protestant and Catholic faiths shaking hands across the divide. The Apprentice Boys re-routed their march in Derry staying away from the city walls but said they would walk the walls when they were ready (Reuters photo)

233 freed under amnesty

AMMAN (J.T.) — Two hundred and thirty-three prisoners, both Jordanians and non-Jordanians, are being released from Jordanian prisons under an amnesty marking the 44th anniversary of His Majesty King Hussein's accession to the Throne.

A statement issued by Minister of Interior Awad Khleifat said the prisoners included all those held under administrative detention at Jweideh, Qafqafa and Beirein.

In compliance with the order, the director general of the Public Security Department, Lieutenant-General Nsouh Muhieddin, has instructed prisons to immediately carry out the minister's instructions, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

The anniversary of the King's accession to the Throne falls on Aug. 11, marking the day when then Prince Hussein became King of Jordan in 1962.

The day is a public holiday in Jordan. All government ministries and departments will remain closed for the day.

Arafat holds talks with Mubarak, chairs key Fateh meeting in Cairo

CAIRO (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat held talks Saturday with President Hosni Mubarak and leaders of his mainstream group to plan a strategy for facing new Israeli obstacles to the peace process.

Mr. Arafat's next step could be crucial since Israel's latest moves — deciding to lift curbs on building Jewish settlements and closing Palestinian offices in Jerusalem — are chipping away at his support among his own people.

After Mr. Arafat's meeting with Mr. Mubarak, Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said the two leaders were both upset by Israel's settlement move and its decision Friday to refuse to reopen peace talks until the Jerusalem offices were shut.

Mr. Musa described the plan to build new settlements as "a grave danger to the peace process."

Asked how the leaders would deal with Israel's demand to shut down offices in Jerusalem, Mr. Musa replied "not in a positive way."

Neither Mr. Arafat nor Mr. Mubarak made statements. Mr. Musa said the two leaders agreed to continue meetings between

themselves and with other Arab leaders towards restarting the Palestinian-Israeli talks as soon as possible.

In the past week, Mr. Mubarak has met both with Syrian President Hafez Assad and the Saudi Arabia's King Fahd to plan an Arab strategy to counter the tough new policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Mr. Arafat also met Wednesday with King Hussein.

Before the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader opened a session Saturday night with the Central Committee of his Fateh movement, committee member Intisar Al Wazir said she hoped the outside world would help make Israel live up to past agreements.

"We will demand increasing the political pressure from all Arab and international parties to force Israel to implement all the agreements," said Ms. Wazir.

Palestinian sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said several of the committee members were disappointed that Arab countries were not giving stronger backing to the Palestinians.

Arafat spokesman, Nabil Abu Rdaine, said the

committee should push Arab countries to follow through on a statement at June's Arab summit to hold back on normalising relations with Israel unless it moves forward in peace talks.

"The Palestinians want to implement the Arab summit resolution," he said.

According to the Palestinian sources, the Fateh meeting also will discuss internal dissension among Palestinians, especially over harsh actions by Mr. Arafat's police in trying to track down activists opposed to Israel.

The Fateh meeting is the first by all 18 committee members since Mr. Arafat began working out agreements with Israel three years ago.

Since several members oppose Mr. Arafat's peace agreements, the meeting could give the PLO leader backing for standing up to Mr. Netanyahu's government. But Mr. Arafat faces the constraint that any strong action could only prompt more Israeli recalcitrance.

Palestinian Foreign Minister Farouk Qaddoumi, a vocal critic of the 1993 Palestinian-Israeli peace deal, attended the meeting

(Continued on page 7)

Levy due in U.S. on private visit

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy is due in the United States on Sunday for a private visit, officials said Saturday. Mr. Levy is due to attend a marriage in New York during the 48-hour trip and is not expected to meet with any U.S. government officials, they added. The foreign minister, reportedly furious at being bypassed on foreign policy issues by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, boycotted Friday's weekly cabinet meeting.

Dole names Kemp as running mate

RUSSELL, Kansas (AFP) — Republican presidential hopeful Bob Dole formally announced Saturday he had selected ex-housing secretary and erstwhile rival Jack Kemp as his vice-presidential running mate. "This is day one of a great team effort," Mr. Dole said at a rally here. "This campaign will end with victory on November 5, 1996." "These are two four-letter words you can teach your children: Dole-Kemp," the often wry Dole quipped (see earlier story on page 4).

Sabbath protests continue in Bar Ilan

WEST JERUSALEM (AFP) — Two thousand ultra-orthodox Jews squared up to one thousand opposing leftwing protesters on a main Jerusalem street on Saturday in protests over respect for the Sabbath, the Jewish day of rest. For the sixth week running ultra-orthodox protesters dressed in 18th century robes lined one side of Bar Ilan street.

Iraq demands complete lifting of U.N. sanctions

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq called on Saturday for a complete lifting of the economic embargo against it as the United Nations was preparing to loosen the sanctions by allowing limited sales of oil to purchase food and medicines. "The embargo must be lifted, because it is against international law," the official daily Al Iraq said. "If the embargo was linked to Iraq's entrance into Kuwait, it should have been lifted once Iraq left this country."

"But it is clear, after all these years of the embargo, that it is an American-Zionist decision which is not linked to the interests of the international community," the newspaper added.

"The continuation of the embargo represents an increase in losses for countries who suffer from it, that is why the circle of countries opposed to it is growing," Al Iraq said.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee on Thursday formally adopted technical guidelines for a May 20 oil-for-food deal after Washington decided to drop its objections to proposals for implementing the accord.

Under the deal, Iraq will be allowed to sell \$2 billion of oil every six months under strict international control to raise money for badly-needed food and medicine.

Newspapers in Baghdad on Saturday ran large head-

lines approving of the deal, saying it came despite "obstacles created by the United States, which caused worldwide condemnation."

The oil-for-food deal is a temporary exception to help ease the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The oil embargo is to remain in force until Iraq has complied with U.N. disarmament resolutions dating from Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait and the 1991 Gulf war when a U.S.-led coalition routed Iraqi troops from the emirate.

Saddam Zeban Al Hassan, director-general of the State Oil Marketing Organisation (SOMO), said Iraq was ready to export oil as soon as the United Nations sent to Iraq the overseers to approve oil contracts and the monitors to ensure that the plan worked properly.

Iraq was in the process of concluding oil sale contracts with European, American and Asian companies, he said.

"We have met with these companies and they have expressed their full willingness to buy Iraqi oil. We are only waiting for (U.N.) procedures to be completed in order to sign contracts," Mr. Hassan said. Exports would begin "very soon," he added.

Over the last few weeks Baghdad has been the venue of oil talks by businessmen from Turkey, France, Italy, South Korea, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria and

other countries seeking either to buy Iraq's oil or sell food and medicine in line with the agreement.

Iraqi newspapers said on Saturday a large group of Turkish businessmen was in Iraq meeting officials from different ministries trying to conclude business deals. An Algerian delegation is holding talks with Iraq's trade ministry to sell food and medicine.

Mr. Hassan said Iraq's oil export outlets — the pipeline from northern Iraq to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan and Mina Al Bakr terminal in the Gulf — were ready for operation.

"Our (oil) ports and facilities are completely ready for export. Our port in the south, Mina Al Bakr, and the Turkish Ceyhan port are ready," he said.

Iraq, whose partial oil sale is estimated between 700,000 to 800,000 barrels per day (b/d), intends to export 450,000 b/d via Turkey and the remainder through terminals on the Gulf.

Two Turkish ministers will visit Iraq on Sunday for talks on reopening the oil pipeline between Iraq and Turkey and bilateral trade ties, the Anatolian news agency said.

The agency said Justice Minister Sevkett Kazan and Education Minister Mehmet Saglam would go to Iraq but did not say how long they would stay.

Iraq demands complete lifting of U.N. sanctions

Ethiopian troops said to pull out of Somalia

NAIROBI (Agencies) — Aid officials said on Saturday Ethiopian troops had pulled out of at least two Somali border towns seized in an assault with Somali allies on Muslim fundamentalist forces.

They said staff visited the Somali border town of Belet-Hawa on Saturday and saw the bodies of 18 Al Itihad Al Islam (Islamic Union) Muslim fundamentalist fighters in the police station.

They quoted residents as saying Ethiopian troops had surrounded the station and killed the fighters inside the building on Friday.

"No one seems in control of Belet-Hawa now. The Ethiopians pulled back into Ethiopia last night," said a Western aid official.

"The market is open and the town wasn't heavily shot up. In Dollow we hear

of one killed and the Ethiopians have also gone."

In the Somali capital Mogadishu, Al Itihad Al Islam officials said at least 12 people were killed and 20 kidnapped by Ethiopian forces in Belet-Hawa before they were beaten back into Ethiopia.

Al Itihad Al Islam who are fighting a hit-and-run guerrilla war for the independence of Ethiopia's barren Ogaden region, bordering both Somalia and Kenya. Foreign aid workers evacuated from the Somali town of Luq by air to Nairobi said they saw Ethiopian helicopter gunships and heavy artillery pounding the area on Friday after forces seized two other towns nearer the border with Ethiopia since Thursday.

(Continued on page 3)

On the Occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's accession to the Throne



ARAB BANK

has the honour to convey to

HIS MAJESTY KING HUSSEIN

and to the Jordanian People

Its felicitations and most cordial wishes

U.N. talks on more anti-Sudan sanctions remain bogged down

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — Indonesia wants to block plans to indefinitely tighten sanctions against Sudan for failing to hand over militants suspected of attempting to kill the Egyptian president, diplomats said Friday.

U.N. Security Council diplomats have been negotiating the text of a draft resolution that would suspend all international flights by Sudan Airways from September.

The measure would reinforce diplomatic sanctions against Khartoum in force since May for failing to extradite three militants wanted in connection with the June 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa.

Indonesia on Thursday suggested amending the draft text to ensure that the Security Council consider renewing the sanctions after six months if Khartoum still failed to comply.

However, the U.S. delegation was strongly opposed to the amendment on grounds that sanctions imposed for only a period of six months would be "an exercise in

futility," one Western diplomat said.

Diplomats said that the U.S. goal appeared to be to "punish" Sudan rather than to use the sanctions as an incentive to press the Sudanese government to change its attitude.

Other permanent security council members such as China, France and Russia, fear that unless the resolution provides for a further Security Council decision there is a danger the sanctions may never be lifted, producing dire humanitarian consequences.

They point to the case of Iraq, whose people have been hit by six years of economic sanctions imposed after the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Egypt had originally planned to present the draft to the Security Council earlier this week, but diplomats said Friday it was not known how much longer the negotiations would take in the light of the latest developments.

President Hosni Mubarak, meanwhile, denied Sudanese accusations that Egypt wrote the draft resolution that would ban international

flights by Sudan's national airlines, Egyptian newspapers said Saturday.

President Mubarak said that Egypt was consulting with U.N. members about the ban, and he implied that Egypt was not in favour of it.

"Egypt does not agree with choking an entire people to face terrorism," President Mubarak was quoted as saying by the state-run Al-Ahram daily. However, he also urged the Sudanese government to stop its alleged support of terrorism.

Sudan has always denied that the suspects are in its territory. On Friday, Sudanese President Omar Hassan Ali Bashir told Sudanese television that he welcomed any investigating team to examine his government's efforts to find the suspects, Egypt's Middle East News Agency said.

Relations between Sudan and Egypt have deteriorated immensely since the attack on President Mubarak. They appeared to be on the brink of improvement when the two leaders met on the sidelines of an Arab summit in June and agreed to make an effort to sort out their differences.

Afghan ministerial team in Pakistan for mending fences

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — A four-member Afghan ministerial delegation arrived here Saturday, saying it would discuss all issues clouding relations with Pakistan in an attempt to improve bilateral ties.

"We intend to discuss how the ties between the two countries can be improved," the official Pakistani AFP news agency quoted the delegation leader, Interior Minister Yunes Qanuni, as saying on arrival.

Mr. Qanuni said the delegation would discuss all

political, economic and trade issues that led to the "deterioration" of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Pakistan's relations with the Afghan government, led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, deteriorated after the Pakistani embassy in Kabul was burned in a mob attack in September 1995.

Mr. Qanuni said discussions would include the reopening of the Pakistani mission, which has been operating from the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad since the incident, in which

one Pakistani died and several others were wounded.

He said the "ground for reopening the embassy (in Kabul) is fully prepared."

Another topic on the agenda will be the restoration of overland trade routes to land-locked Afghanistan through Pakistan.

Afghan officials said the supply of food and fuel to Afghanistan and plans for a massive regional oil and gas pipeline will come up during the Islamabad talks.

"We have come here with full authority and good intentions and hope that Pak-

istan will reciprocate similarly," Mr. Qanuni said.

In Kabul officials earlier said the delegation would meet Pakistani President Farooq Leghari, Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Foreign Minister Sardar Asef Ahmad Ali and Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar.

"The main thrust of the agenda during talks with the Pakistanis will be mutual cooperation and the improvement of relations between our two countries," presidential spokesman

Abdul Aziz Murad said in the Afghan capital.

"We want the best possible relations with Pakistan and we hope this visit helps iron out the remaining differences that exist between our two governments," Mr. Murad said.

In the past, Kabul has frequently blamed Pakistan for providing material support to its rival, the Taleban militia, which controls half of Afghanistan and has been besieging the Afghan capital in an attempt to topple Mr. Rabbani.

'Kuwaiti army will be self-sufficient in 5 years'

KUWAIT (AFP) — Kuwait needs between three and five years to build up its military strength to combat threats from Iraq, Kuwaiti Chief of Staff General Ali Al Momen told a newspaper here Saturday.

"We need three to five years maximum, after which we will be in a position to rely on ourselves, we will then have completed our armament programme and our infrastructure," the general told the Al-Anbaa daily.

He said the Kuwaiti army could "partly repel" an Iraqi attack at the moment, but that Kuwait would need help from its allies.

"If the Iraqi regime is thinking of provoking Kuwait, it should think

twice as the accords and treaties agreed with brother countries and friends are aimed at preventing a repetition of (the Iraqi invasion on) Aug. 2, 1990," said Gen. Momen.

After the liberation of Kuwait by a U.S.-led multinational force in Feb. 1991, the emirate agreed defence accords with the United States, France and Britain.

After the failure of the Kuwaiti forces to repel the Iraqi invasion, the emirate embarked on an \$11 billion arms spending spree over 10 years in a bid to improve its armed forces. Officials said Kuwait spent around \$960 million on arms in 1995.

Bahrain to build hotel on disputed island

MANAMA (AP) — Bahrain is building a hotel on islands disputed with neighbouring Qatar, newspapers reported Saturday.

The four-floor, 50-room hotel on the Hawar island chain will be completed in two months, Bahrain's housing minister, Sheikh Khalid Al Khalifa, was quoted as saying.

"The government plans to turn the country's southern region, of which the Hawar islands are a part, into a tourist area," he said.

Bahrain and Qatar have been locked in a dispute over the island chain for years. Last month, Bahrain's crown prince said that his country was prepared to fight to defend its claim.

Saudi Arabia, which neighbours both countries, has been mediating between the two countries.

Bahrain-Qatar relations have been strained since 1986 when Qatari forces seized 29 workers from a Dutch company sent by Bahrain to the disputed Fasit Al Dibai reef to build a coast guard station.

Qatar took the case to the international court of justice in 1991 after an earlier round of Saudi mediation failed. But Bahrain has rejected the court's jurisdiction and insists the Saudis continue their mediating role.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Syrian premier to visit Iran next week

TEHRAN (AFP) — Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zoubi is due to visit Iran sometime next week, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported Saturday. Mr. Zoubi is to hold talks with Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Vice President Hassan Habibi on "important regional and international developments," it said without giving the exact date of the visit. The agency said Mr. Zoubi's visit was "crucial" as it would have followed a three-day official trip to Iran by Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan beginning on Saturday. Iran and Syria sharply protested an accord between Turkey and Israel in February to allow Israeli pilots to train in Turkish airspace. Tehran and Damascus, traditional allies in the Middle East, have stepped up contact since Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in May. Iran, Turkey and Syria also hold regular meetings to discuss the situation in Northern Iraq.

99 illegals arrested in Greece

KOMOTINI, Greece (AFP) — Ninety-nine illegal immigrants, mostly Asians, were arrested near Dhidhymotikhon in Northeast Greece, after they crossed the border from Turkey, police said. A 30-year-old Greek lorry driver was also arrested. He allegedly took the immigrants aboard his truck for two million drachmas (\$8,500) to Lamia in central Greece. The immigrants, 50 Pakistanis, 45 Bengalis, three Indians and one Liberian, had crossed the River Evros between Greece and Turkey in the Mandra region. They were being detained at Orestias, north of Dhidhymotikhon, where they will appear in court on charges of illegal entry before being deported, Greek police said.

Beirut protests round-up of Lebanese

BEIRUT (AP) — The government protested to Angola Friday over the arrest of 70 Lebanese in the capital Luanda and demanded their release. Immigration Affairs Minister Ali Khali said the government has initiated diplomatic contacts to free the 70 and ensure their safety and security of their property in Angola. The state-run National News Agency reported. It did not say why the Lebanese, including several businessmen, had been rounded up in the last few days. Saeed Asaad, a member of parliament from South Lebanon where most of the Lebanese in Angola hail from, said Friday that Angolan police had detained 182 Lebanese for investigation after raiding their homes. He said that information came from Ali Nisr, the Lebanese consul in Luanda. There was no immediate explanation for the higher figure.

Former hostage enjoys Beirut visit

BEIRUT (AP) — Terry Anderson says he's enjoyed his first few days back in Beirut as a free man and celebrity. "It's been exciting these first few days. I've enjoyed it very much," the former U.S. hostage told reporters Friday after meeting with President Elias Hrawi. Mr. Anderson, who was chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press when he was kidnapped by Muslim extremists in Beirut in 1985, returned to the Lebanese capital Monday for the first time since his release on Dec. 4, 1991. He's in Beirut for two weeks to film a documentary for the American Cable News Network on Lebanon as it recovers from the devastation of the 1975-90 civil war. The documentary involves interviews with various political and religious leaders. Accompanied by his Lebanese wife, Madeleine Bassil, Mr. Anderson met for an hour Friday with Mr. Hrawi at the presidential palace in the hilltop suburb of Baabda.

Kahalani raps Bassiouny for interfering in Jerusalem row

The Jerusalem Post

INTERNAL Security Minister Avidor Kahalani has charged Egyptian Ambassador Mohammad Bassiouny with wrongly interfering in Israel's internal affairs by trying to intervene in the dispute over the Palestinian (National) Authority Council member's Jerusalem office.

"Amit Glusgo, a senior aide to the minister, said that Kahalani informed Bassiouny that his intervention in the dispute, which

was officially resolved yesterday, was unwelcome. Bassiouny was told "he had no place getting involved," Glusgo said.

Bassiouny, who was in contact with the Palestinian councilor, Hatem Abdul Khader, throughout the week-long dispute, was not available for comment.

Abdul Khader had said that Bassiouny played a central role in reaching the compromise.

Glusgo denied this, but confirmed that Bassiouny gave him the first indication that Abdul Khader

wanted to resolve the dispute before it came to a head.

"We informed (Abdul) Khader of our demands, and that he had a choice of accepting them or facing police action," Glusgo said. "There were no negotiations. (Abdul) Khader was simply informed of the situation and given a choice of whether to accept the minister's demands or not."

Glusgo said that when he met with Abdul Khader at the Hyatt Hotel on Tuesday, "I told him exactly what was being asked of him —

that he must sign a statement saying that his office is private, and that it is not connected with the Palestinian Authority or PA council, or his being a member of the PA council."

The statement, dated Wednesday but apparently not sent to the ministry until yesterday, is in the form of a one-paragraph letter from Abdul Khader to Kahalani.

"After your honour took out an order prohibiting me from using the office in my home in Beit Hanina, I herein clarify and state that the said office is not an offi-

cial office and does not represent the Palestinian Authority, and does not represent the Palestinian Legislative Council, but is a private office," the letter states.

Ministry officials were unable to say whether a similar demand to cut off connections with the PNA or "close down" would be made of the two or three other offices allegedly affiliated with the PNA in Jerusalem, in accordance with the government ban on PNA activity in the city.

CIA report asserts Saddam's prospects of continued power are declining

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has concluded that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's prospect of holding onto power another year is declining, but the assessment is not shared by two other agencies.

A key element of the analysis appeared to be that talks between the Saddam regime and the United Nations to ease the international embargo on Iraq would fail. Negotiations on arranging emergency oil sales succeeded after the CIA report was

compiled. The agency said it sees no "immediate threats" to the Iraqi president but reported "change could come suddenly and violently, as it has throughout Iraq's history."

The CIA, the State Department, and the Defence Intelligence Agency provided written responses on foreign policy in May to the Senate Intelligence Committee. The panel recently released the assessments.

All three agencies agreed that signs of President Sad-

dam's regime deteriorating are intensifying, but only the CIA suggested that President Saddam may not survive a year. The State Department said he still could be in power a year from now, and the Defence Intelligence Agency said he was likely to continue ruling Iraq in the coming year.

The reports preceding the recent agreement between Iraq and the United Nations slightly eases an international embargo. It allows Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy food and

medicine and pay reparations of the 1991 Gulf war.

The CIA said talks on resuming the sales helped relieve pressure on the regime and produced a temporary upswing in the economy, but the spy agency expected the negotiations to fail and took that view into account in its conclusions.

"The likely failure of the U.N. oil-for-food talks, continued turmoil in the ruling Tikriti clan, Saddam's repressive domestic policies, and Iraq's deteriorating regional position — particularly the souring of

relations with Jordan — suggest Saddam's prospects for survival for another year are declining," the CIA said.

The State Department said Iraq's decision to reopen negotiations on oil sales, along with several defections by military officials, indicated a "growing weakness."

"However, Saddam's ruthlessness and the effectiveness of his numerous internal security organs act as strong deterrents to potential challengers," the department concluded.

The report called President Saddam "a brutal survivor," saying "it is possible that he could still be in power a year from now."

The Defence Intelligence Agency reported that President Saddam's sudden removal "remains possible" but added: "Given the lack of a capable, credible opposition around which disaffected Iraqis can rally, and the continued integrity and effectiveness of the security apparatus, Saddam is likely to remain in power for the coming year."

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:05Cartoon — The Mask
15:30Bush School
15:45Mac and Mailey
16:00Italian Soccer
17:00Sciences Cartoon
17:15La Vie Devant Moi
17:30Game Show — Pyramide
18:00 Magazine — La Marche
Du Siecle/Pan One
19:00Le Journal
19:15 Magazine — Sports Et
Musique
19:30News Headlines
19:35Cinema, Cinema, Cinema
20:00American Chart Show
20:45 Special Documentary On
The Occasion Of His Majesty's
Accession To The Throne
21:10Black's Magic
22:00News in English
22:25Frenchie
23:10 The Boston Pops Orchestra

PRAYER TIMES

04:27Fajr
05:52(Sunrise) Duha
12:41Dhuhr
16:12Asr
19:30Maghreb
20:55Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Deserts. 17334

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church
Tel. 652526
Evangelical Lutheran Church
Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 845457
The Latter-Day Saints Tel.
654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel.
675691.
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 811295
English-speaking
Latin Catholics Parish Tel.
614190.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Jum'ah Abu Dhiab. 758848
Dr. Khalil Abdo. 732920
Dr. Walid Al Masri. 675485
Dr. Yousef Rashid. 896301
Firas pharmacy. 661912
Ferdous pharmacy. 778336
Al Asema pharmacy. 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy. 623672
Al Salam pharmacy. 636730
Yacoub pharmacy. 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy. 637660
Najih pharmacy. 847632
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu. 281484
Al Quds pharmacy. (—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Walid Halaseh. 982799
Khalifeh pharmacy. 985417

WEATHER

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Min./Max. temp.
Amman. 20/31
Agaba. 26/38

Deserts. 17334

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel.
771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church
Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
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Royal Wings (RW) Flights

10:00 Amman (arriving at Marja Airport from QAIA) (RW)
20:30Agaba (RW)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
09:30Jeddah (RJ)
09:55Larnaca (RJ)
10:05Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
10:10Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:50Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:00Beirut (RJ)
16:30New York (RJ)
16:55Amsterdam, Brussels (RJ)
18:00Paris (RJ)
18:25Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:50London (RJ)
19:15Athens (RJ)
19:25Ankara, Istanbul (RJ)
19:30Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
19:45Frankfurt (RJ)
20:25Rome (RJ)
20:30Tunis (RJ)
22:00Vienna, Larnaca (RJ)
01:10Cairo (RJ)

DEPARTURES



EXHIBITION OPENED: Her Royal Highness Princess Rahma Bint Al Hassan on Saturday opens an exhibition of works by artist Salim Bandak. The exhibition includes furniture and metal ornaments (Petra photo)

Srour pursues efforts to end parliamentary crisis 24-member group stresses boycott of Lower House meetings will continue

By Tareq Momani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srour, on Saturday pursued efforts towards ending the crisis resulting from a 24-member parliamentary group's decision last week to boycott Parliament's sessions in protest at what they called failure on the part of Jordan Television to screen the views of deputies who opposed the government's plans for lifting subsidies on bread and animal feed.

Mr. Srour met with the group members and offered them a compromise solution to ensure the continuation of the extraordinary session, according to informed parliamentary sources.

Mr. Srour was reported to have told the group that in next Wednesday's session he will allow the opposition to

deliver a statement expressing its opposition to the government's plan to be aired in full on Jordan Television.

Deputy Mohammad Oweida who is a member of the opposition group told the Jordan Times: "We have been offered this idea and allowed to air our views condemning the behaviour of the government and Jordan Television for their action. Mr. Srour has pledged that Jordan Television would screen the full statement of the opposition provided that the 24-member group ended their boycott of the sessions."

According to Deputy Oweida, who is a member of the Islamic Action Front party, "this offer will be conveyed to the group and discussed at a meeting to be held Monday."

But he reiterated the group's opposition to the government's plan to

lift the subsidy on bread and animal feed and called on the parliamentary committee which was formed to discuss the subsidy question with the prime minister to exercise pressure on the government to scrap its plan.

"If we attend the next session, we will vote down the plan," added Mr. Oweida.

Deputy Ahmad Kasasbeh criticised the 24-member group for boycotting Parliament sessions saying that the legislature's work should not be disrupted.

"I believe that the group has diverted from their main objective and instead of defending their views of opposing the lifting of subsidies they are boycotting the sessions that discuss other topics," added Mr. Kasasbeh.

Describing the parliamentary committee's alternative offers to the

government as just and fair, Mr. Kasasbeh said "one has to consider the economic reform programme and the deficit in the state's budget."

He claimed that the House was now split into three groups — 24 members opposing the government's plan, 22 members who are also members of the government and support its views and 34 members who form the rest of the House.

"If the 24 members persist in their position, the government will not feel obliged to take into consideration the House's recommendations in deciding on the prices," added the deputy.

He expressed hope that the 24-member group will change its position about boycotting the sessions and return to the meetings.

Ministry sets new dairy prices

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of Supply Munir Sohar Saturday fixed the price of fresh milk at 275 fils per litre, yoghurt at 500 fils a kilogramme and lebaneh at JD 1.68 a kilogramme.

The price hikes are in response to dairy farmers' and stockbreeders' complaints about recent price increases in animal feed.

The new prices come into effect today and are set as follows:

a) one kilo of fresh yoghurt will cost 500 fils, half kilo 270 fils, and 200 grammes will sell at 125 fils.

b) one kilo of lebaneh will cost JD 1.680, half kilo 860 fils, 250 grammes 430 fils and seven kilos JD 9.

The new prices of yoghurt and lebaneh indicate a price increase from 13 to 18 per cent.

Ministry of Supply Secretary General Ahmad Kreishan assured that the price setting of the dairy products was carefully studied and that the hike corresponds to the price increase in animal feed.

The ministry last week announced new prices of barley, corn and bran.

Referring to a proposed anti-trust law drafted by the Jordan Consumer Protection Society (JCPS) to guard against the hoarding of goods, Mr. Kreishan said the country has sufficient amounts of wheat, flour, grain and other cereals.



A dairy plant employee loads milk cartons on a conveyor belt (file photo)

Meteor shower expected Astronomers say best visibility from Azraq

By Marian Nimry
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A meteor stream caused by the passing of the comet Swift/Tuttle in 1992 will be visible to the naked eye early Monday morning.

The meteor stream will cross the earth's orbit and is expected to have two peaks, according to Khaled Tell, head of the information committee at the Astronomy Society.

The first peak will be

at 3 a.m. local time on Monday, and the meteors will fall at the rate of about 400 meteors per hour, Mr. Tell explained.

The second peak will be around 3 p.m. Monday, and the meteors will fall at the rate of about 100 meteors per hour for about 2 or three hours, he said.

"Only the brightest meteors will be seen from Amman," said Mr. Tell, "because the city lights will obscure the light of the meteors."

All the world will be

able to see the meteor shower from different angles as the meteors will fall vertically, and the sighting from Jordan will be different from the sighting in the Philippines for example, continued Mr. Tell.

The weight of the meteor particles will not exceed 2 grammes and the particles themselves will have turned to ashes somewhere along their descent into the earth's atmosphere at an altitude between 100 and 60 kilometres.

The meteor shower is very fast; it is white and blue and leaves a bright yellow tail behind it, said Mr. Tell.

"If the meteor weighs around 4-5 grammes then it is called a fireball, and its brightness is around one-quarter the brightness of the sun," Mr. Tell explained.

Mr. Tell and about 40 other members of the Astronomy Society left for Azraq Saturday to await and observe the expected meteor shower.

Government plans to restructure Free Trade Zones Corporation

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet Saturday announced a plan designed to create a mechanism which would enable the Free Trade Zones Corporation (FTZC) to operate more efficiently.

According to a statement issued at the end of the Cabinet's regular session, the plan to restructure the FTZC was deemed necessary due to recent increase in development within both the economic and investment sectors.

The plan was recommended by Finance Minister Marwan Awad who stressed the need to reorganise and redistribute the FTZC's offices.

Under the plan the Cabinet has created a personnel committee which would discuss matters pertaining to new job descriptions, as well as a department for administration which would be in charge of appointing night watchmen as well as employees to load and unload goods.

The Cabinet has also decided to link the FTZC located near Zarqa with the corporation's head office in Amman and to entrust the technical department with handling water, electricity, telephone and maintenance.

The plan will also involve setting up teams of workers charged with inspecting the goods and supervising the process of bringing in and taking out stored goods to and from the zone area, and will make arrangements

for the corporation to request the Civil Defence Department's help in guaranteeing public safety and emergency services.

Through its plan the Cabinet has requested that the FTZC investors ensure the adherence to public safety requirements in all warehouses, and urged local firms to conduct studies on ways to set up fire alarm systems covering all the free zone in the Zarqa region.

Royal Wings plans flights to Sharm Al Sheikh

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Wings, Jordan's second airline designed for short-haul flights, Saturday announced plans to operate flights between the Egyptian resort of Sharm Al Sheikh and Aqaba to begin Aug 24.

The airline, which inaugurated operations in February with two daily flights between Amman and Aqaba, will now expand its schedule to include a weekly round

trip to Sharm Al Sheikh.

Royal Wings began operating international flights in March, with five weekly flights to Israel.

Royal Wing's Director General Ahdad Quntar has stated that passenger seating to Aqaba is running on an average of 50 per cent capacity, while flights to Tel Aviv average 65 per cent.

Mr. Quntar flew Sunday to Sharm Al Sheikh and concluded the con-

tract with the Egyptian National Travel Company. He added that he is currently negotiating with Jordanian travel agents and tour operators in order to organise three weekly flights between Sharm Al Sheikh and Aqaba with a view to increasing tourism to Jordan.

Mr. Quntar stated an expectation that tourist groups arriving from Sharm Al Sheikh will visit

Petra, Wadi Rum and other archaeological sites in the southern regions of the Kingdom.

The airline's future plans include flights to Damascus, Beirut, Alexandria, Larnaka and Ghardaqa.

Royal Wings is owned by the national carrier Royal Jordanian (RJ) with one per cent ownership belonging to the Employees' Savings Fund of RJ.

Ethiopian troops said to leave Somalia

(Continued from page 1)

Luq is 60 kilometres south of the Ethiopian border but the aid officials said they had no word on casualties there.

Dollow is 40 kilometres to the southeast.

The aid officials were speaking by telephone from the northeastern Kenyan town of Mandera, one kilometre from Belet-Hawa and adjacent to the Ethiopian and Somali borders.

They said three bombs hit Mandera during Friday's fighting and local authorities imposed a curfew as the Kenyan army went on alert.

North Mogadishu faction leader Ali Mahdi Mohammad on Saturday condemned the Ethiopian attack, urged Ethiopia to withdraw its forces from Somalia and called on the international community to push for a pullout.

Diplomats said Al Itihad

forces had fled deeper into Somalia to escape the cross-border assault by Ethiopian troops.

The Ethiopian incursion, supported by the Somali National Front (SNF) since Thursday, was intended to strike at Muslim fundamentalist training camps and bases in western Somalia, they said.

"It appears to be an in-and-out operation by the Ethiopians to clear out what they see as the fundamentalist vipers' nest," a Western diplomat in Nairobi told Reuters.

He said the Ethiopian operation was apparently revenge for recent attacks including a bomb blast at a hotel in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Aug. 4 and the attempted assassination of a government minister on July 8.

"I hear there were a couple of training camps in the area they hit," said the diplomat.

adding it was unclear if the camps were used by Ethiopian Muslim fundamentalists as well as Somalis.

"The fundamentalists are fleeing towards Gabbah-Harre pursued by the SNF," he added. "The Marehan (clan) are hammering them."

Gabbah Harre is 90 kilometres from the Ethiopian border and south of the towns seized on Thursday and Friday.

An Ethiopian Foreign Ministry spokesman in Addis Ababa declined to comment on the reports of the Ethiopian incursion.

Somalia has had no government and has been torn apart by war since the fall of late President Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991.

Somali factions fight

At least 13 people were killed and 28 wounded on

Saturday in the first clan battle involving Somali faction leader Hussein Aided's forces since he took over after the death of his father at the start of the month.

Witnesses said militiamen loyal to Mr. Aided and his arch-enemy, Mr. Ali Mahdi, fought in the village of Warmohan, 45 kilometres southwest of the capital.

Mr. Ali Mahdi had reacted to the death of faction leader Mohammad Farah Aided, the scourge of U.S. and U.N. peacekeeping troops in Somalia in 1993, by announcing a unilateral ceasefire by his alliance of forces.

But he said he was reconsidering the move after the election of Mr. Hussein. Hopes among some Somalis that Mr. Aided's death for an early end to six years of civil war faded when Hussein vowed to follow in his footsteps and fight his enemies.

WHAT'S GOING ON

LECTURE

* "Results of the 1996 Season at 'Ain Ghazal'" by Professors Gary Rollefson and Zeidan Kafafi at the American Center of Oriental Research, University Road at 7:00 p.m. (Tel. 846-117).

EXHIBITIONS

- * "Science for Health" exhibition at the British Council, until Aug. 17.
- * Abstract (plastic) art by Hussein Da'seh and Nader Samarah on Jerusalem at the Orfiati Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (Tel. 826932), until Aug. 15.
- * Graphic works by Eman Odeh at the Phoenix Art Gallery (Tel 695291), until Aug. 15.
- * Photo exhibition by Hani Hourani entitled "People and Places" at Baladna Art Gallery (Tel. 687598), until Aug. 15

British daily sees romance for Andrew

Popular is shown as a... The... that the...

Hungarian scrap merchant admits stealing tanks

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Woman pregar with 3 babies

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Alabamians may first all-male US quintuplets

life

Vampire rapist fails drug test returns to jail



Rescue workers search for more victims in a dam, 15 kilometres away from Virgen De Las Nieves campsite, after a torrent of mud and rock swept over a crowded family campsite in the Spanish Pyrenees city of Biescas on Aug. 7 (Reuters photo)

Searchers find new bodies as toll rises to 77

BIESCAS, Spain (AFP) — Searchers discovered new bodies Saturday as the toll of the Spanish campsite disaster rose to 77 and officials warned that up to 40 other people were still missing. Around 1,000 people were engaged in the search operation which focused around the Sabinanigo Dam, 15 kilometres downstream from the campsite at Biescas, northern Spain which was devastated by a freak flashflood last Wednesday. "There is sadly every possibility that numerous bodies swept away by the violent current have been carried down the 15 kilometres of the Gallego River which runs alongside the campsite and ended up blocked against the dam," said one firefighter. Three bodies were pulled from the mud early Saturday, two just a kilometre from the campsite, the third at an as yet unrevealed location, an official of the Aragon Regional Administration said. Two more bodies were discovered at around midday under branches on the banks of the Gallego River, two kilometres away. A legal investigation into the causes of the disaster. Mechanical shovels worked throughout the night under projectors to sift through the mud, twisted metal and tree stumps that swept through the campsite. Sniffer dogs were also used to comb the area. One body, that of a baby half-buried under a mound of earth and stones, was located because of the cloud of flies hovering over it, one of the searchers said. Two Civil Protection Agents aboard an inflatable dinghy manoeuvred through the muddy waters at the Sabinanigo Dam, clearing away branches, parts of refrigerator boxes, caravan doors, lone shoes and other debris carried away by the torrent. According to Luis Zapatero, the leader of the team of Spanish frogmen who will search the reservoir Saturday, the bodies should now begin rising to the surface. "This phenomenon generally occurs some 48 hours after drowning," he said. "Other bodies, between seven and 20, will certainly be discovered in the next 48 hours," predicted a spokesman for Aragon's provincial government, Juan Carlos Cordoba. Mr. Cordoba said it remained difficult to give a precise number for those missing, but he estimated it was between 30 and 40. However, he said some of those unaccounted for may have left the campsite at the time of the flooding and not since reported their whereabouts to any officials. The authorities have long given up all hope of finding any further survivors. Of the 77 dead, 71 have been identified — four Dutch and two French nationals were among the victims so far identified. In Jaca, 25 kilometres from the campsite where a temporary morgue has been set up, 20 families were still waiting for news of missing relatives. Aragon authorities appealed to tourists in the region, both Spanish and foreign, to contact their families to tell them they were safe. The switchboards of public offices have been inundated with calls from abroad or from embassies in Madrid as callers seek news of relatives vacationing in the Spanish Pyrenees. The authorities have established that 634 campers were registered at the Las Nieves site at the time of the disaster. However, the figure may not be definitive because some people do not register all family members and there could have been a number of visitors. The controversy over the original decision to locate the campsite at Biescas continued to rumble Saturday. According to the Spanish agency EFE, a report seven years ago advised against siting it in a narrow valley at the foot of a mountain through which a river runs. Regional officials however have insisted that the disaster arose because of exceptional circumstances likely to arise "once in a thousand years."



Dead bodies lie on tables next to coffins in Jaca's Ice Pavilion after a torrent of mud and rock swept over a crowded family campsite in the Spanish Pyrenees city of Biescas on Aug. 7. At least 77 people were killed and more than 180 were injured in the floods (Reuters photo)

Burundi's new ruler wants talks with rebels

BUJUMBURA (R) — The Burundian defence minister said Hutu rebels killed at least 32 people and wounded 28 Saturday in the violent northwestern Cibitoke province. "All the victims were civilians," Defence Minister Firmin Sindoyibeba told Reuters, adding the Tutsi-led army had begun an operation in Cibitoke, the most dangerous area in the central African country where the army and rebels have fought for three years. The attack came as Burundi's new military ruler, Pierre Buyoya from the country's minority Tutsi tribe, said that the rebels had to disarm and denounce violence if they wanted to enter into peace talks. "We can start looking for ways of how to get in contact with rebel leaders if they show signals they are ready to denounce the violence and the ideology of genocide and lay down their weapons," Maj. Buyoya said in an interview in Bujumbura. "At the moment there are no such signals. But the rebels say they want to talk to us and we say we want dialogue. Now there is a will, and we have to be patient to go through a peace process," he told Reuters. Maj. Buyoya, who took power on July 25 after the army toppled Hutu President Sylvestre Ntibunganya, said if rebel leader Leonard Nyangoma did not accept them he would face war. "We are offering dialogue. If Nyangoma does not accept this offer there will be war. He must know that we are also ready to fight. If forced, we will make war." Some 150,000 people have died in Burundi in three years of vicious war between the army and rebels of the Hutu majority, which make up 85 per cent of Burundi's 5.6 million people. Maj. Buyoya said his coup was necessary to head off genocide in Burundi, but regional African leaders have imposed economic sanctions against the landlocked country to push for a return to civilian rule. Neighbouring Rwanda, where up to a million people died in war and genocide massacres in 1994, Friday joined Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Cameroon in an economic blockade that includes severed air links. "The ideology of genocide is continuing," said state radio, which reported that 22 people were killed in the Saturday morning raid in Cibitoke, the country's most violent region. There was no immediate independent confirmation of the report. Speaking at his heavily guarded hilltop villa overlooking Bujumbura, Maj. Buyoya promised to respond soon to regional leaders who demanded immediate direct peace talks with Hutu rebels. Hutu rebel leader Nyangoma, a former interior minister, called on Burundians Friday to disobey their military rulers and said he expected sanctions to force the Tutsi-dominated government to negotiate. Air France and the Belgian airline Sabena have cancelled flights to Bujumbura scheduled for Sunday and the United States has advised its nationals to leave. U.N. officials said the body had decided to evacuate non-essential staff estimated to number between 30 and 70 from all aid agencies, leaving about 100 in Burundi. They were trying to get authorisation for planes to land. Maj. Buyoya played down the embargo, which has caused an economic crunch in the landlocked country that imports all its fuel and relies on coffee exports for 90 per cent of its hard currency. "We chose the embargo over genocide," he said. "We are preparing ourselves to face the hardship. We will continue to explain to our neighbours that an embargo is not a solution."

Rebels resist in Grozny as Russian armour attacks

GROZNY, Russia (R) — Russian troops and Chechen rebels fought fierce battles in Grozny Saturday as the guerrillas put up stiff resistance to a new armoured assault on the fifth day of a major offensive. Boris Yeltsin, whose second presidential term has so far been marred by battles which have killed hundreds, sacked his personal representative in Chechnya Oleg Lobov and replaced him with General Alexander Lebed, his national security adviser. Television channels cancelled some entertainment programmes after Mr. Yeltsin declared Saturday a day of mourning for Grozny. Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, whose reappointment was comfortably confirmed Saturday by a parliament dominated by Mr. Yeltsin's Communist foes, told deputies the 20-month war was unwinnable and that political solutions had not been exhausted. "But 'terrorists and bandits' had to be put down, he added. ITAR-TASS news agency quoted Moscow government official Sergei Slipchenko in late afternoon as saying federal troops had reached the centre of Grozny and said rebel spokesman Movladi Udugov told him the guerrillas were pulling out. But Mr. Udugov told Reuters they were still resisting a repeated onslaught by Russian armoured columns and eyewitnesses spoke of continued heavy fighting in the centre. "It's a real bloody mincing machine," Mr. Udugov said by telephone. "Russian armour is still trying to break through to the centre of Grozny, they are making attack after attack." But the assaults had been beaten off, he added. Russian television correspondent Abrek Baikov, one of a group of journalists trapped by heavy fighting around the central government compound, said expectations of an early rescue by federal forces had been dashed. "This morning brought us some hope of an early release from our captivity. But every new hour has convinced us it will not be quick," he said in a broadcast at 2 p.m. (1000 GMT). "When federal forces arrived in the centre the rebels did not start running," he said. The rebels appeared more familiar with the battlefield and to have superior tactics. "There is no sign of them running out of ammunition," TASS later quoted Moscow official Sergei Stepashin as saying the journalists had been evacuated by federal troops. Interfax News Agency quoted a military official in Grozny as saying their evacuation would start at 7 p.m. Neither report was confirmed. On Friday, Russian officials were quoted as saying the journalists and other civilians were safe. It was not the case. Among other unconfirmed reports, both sides have accused the other of atrocities and of using civilians as human shields. Interfax quoted rebel leaders as saying Doku Zavgayev, the head of the pro-Moscow Chechen government, was dead. But TASS quoted a member of parliament who said he had spoken to him. Mr. Yeltsin ordered Mr. Chernomyrdin to hold a session of the State Commission on Chechnya Sunday to establish how far his own appointees were to blame for the military debacle this week. It was not clear what effect, if any Saturday's appointment of Gen. Lebed would have, but the general said after Tuesday's daring rebel raid on Grozny that he favoured "a new approach" on talks. The president also ordered Prosecutor General Yuri Skuratov to start a criminal investigation into the attack, which followed weeks of Russian attacks on Chechen villages that began after Mr. Yeltsin was reelected on July 3. Each side accuses the other of breaking a pre-election peace deal. Mr. Yeltsin has removed minister after minister in the aftermath of a series of bungles since he sent his forces to end the rebels' three-year independence drive in December 1994. More than 30,000 people have been killed, most of them civilians. In a sign that Mr. Yeltsin may not intend to soften Kremlin policy against the rebels, he declared Friday: "I will let no one speak to the federal authorities in the language of blackmail. Terrorist raids will be decisively put down." The army admits to more than 100 dead. The rebels say they have killed more than 1,000 soldiers. Civilian casualty figures were not available. The Red Cross says hundreds are wounded and has asked both sides to cease fire so they can be evacuated. Mr. Udugov said he had agreed to talk to Russian officials Sunday morning to discuss opening a "humanitarian corridor" to allow civilians to be evacuated.

U.N. denies Ghali sent aide to campaign in Africa

GENEVA (R) — A United Nations spokeswoman has rejected suggestions Secretary-General Boutros Ghali had sent a senior aide to Africa in June to campaign for his reelection. Therese Gastaut told reporters Ibrahim Fall, who heads the U.N.'s human rights centre in Geneva, had visited two African countries as part of preparations for a continental human rights conference. "I deny that the object of his trip was to campaign for the secretary-general," she said. "It was purely linked to preparations for a human rights conference proposed by Angola." Ms. Gastaut, director of information at the world body's European headquarters, was speaking after an article on Mr. Fall's journey appeared in Friday's edition of the Paris International Herald-Tribune newspaper. She said Mr. Fall, a former Senegalese foreign minister, had gone to Senegal and Gabon on his way to a summit in June of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Yaounde, Cameroon, which he attended with Dr. Ghali. "The purpose was to consult with the Senegalese and Gabonese governments on the Angolan proposal for the first-ever human rights conference at ministerial level in Africa," she added. President Eduardo Dos Santos of Angola proposed convening the conference in a letter to Dr. Ghali earlier this year and the secretary-general, with his High Commissioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso, nominated Mr. Fall to help organise it. The Herald-Tribune article, by its Geneva correspondent, said "high-ranking U.S. and European officials" suspected that Mr. Fall had been despatched to four countries just before the Yaounde summit to whip up backing for Dr. Ghali. A spokesman for the U.S. mission in Geneva, asked about the report, said: "We are looking carefully into the matter but we have nothing further to add at the moment."

Russia's State Duma backs Chernomyrdin as premier

MOSCOW (R) — Russia's Communist-dominated lower house of parliament Saturday approved the reappointment of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who had been nominated by President Boris Yeltsin Friday. Mr. Chernomyrdin, who needed a simple majority of 226 votes in the State Duma, was approved by a hefty 314 votes to 85 with three abstentions in a secret ballot, parliamentary officials said. "I congratulate Viktor Chernomyrdin," Duma Speaker Gennady Seleznyov, a member of the Communist opposition, said. Mr. Chernomyrdin, 58, who first took office in December 1992, thanked deputies after the vote. "From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your trust," he said. "I am sure we will find understanding and many solutions." Deputies in the chamber, in which Communists and their allies command the biggest bloc controlling at least a third of the 450 votes, had earlier attacked his government's economic policy when Mr. Chernomyrdin answered questions after delivering a 45-minute speech. But rejecting him would have provoked a showdown which could have allowed Mr. Yeltsin to dissolve parliament — something most deputies, including the Communists, wanted to avoid. Mr. Chernomyrdin, proposed by the president after Mr. Yeltsin's inauguration, vowed to guide Russia into a new era of economic growth and to improve living standards. He committed himself to "adequate measures" to end the conflict in Chechnya and promised to launch an investigation into a humiliating rebel Chechen offensive in which hundreds of Russian soldiers have been killed or wounded since Tuesday. But he said the only way to peace was through negotiations and added: "A completely military solution is a dead end." Mr. Yeltsin declared Saturday a day of mourning for people killed in the fighting and flags flew at half mast in Moscow. Mr. Yeltsin responded to the rebel attack on Grozny by appointing security supremo Alexander Lebed his representative in Chechnya instead of First Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Lobov. Mr. Yeltsin has vowed to put down the offensive but said talks were the only way to settle the 20-month-old conflict. The rebels want full independence but Mr. Yeltsin has ruled this out. Battles raged on in the centre of Grozny as the rebels put up fierce resistance to a new Russian army assault.



Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin addresses a special session of the State Duma, lower house of parliament Saturday. Mr. Chernomyrdin called to vote on his reappointment by President Boris Yeltsin, saying the government was moving to a new stage of economic reform devoted to growth and structural change (Reuters photo)

Sri Lankan Tamils flee to India

COLOMBO (Agencies) — Tamil civilians from Sri Lanka's war-torn north are fleeing to India by boat, raising the spectre of another refugee exodus, foreign aid workers said Saturday. "Some Tamil families have been seen crossing the (Palk) Straits on Indian trawlers," one aid worker told Reuters. "If this continues, it could become a serious issue." But officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Colombo felt there was little chance of any large-scale movement of refugees. "We do not expect any mass exodus," senior UNHCR official Gottfried Koefner told Reuters. "There is hardly any new reason for that to happen." In Madras, K.K. Rajasekharan Nair, director-general of police in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, told Reuters Saturday that 21 Tamil refugees, including six women and eight children, had arrived Thursday in the town of Rameswaram, about 400 kilometres south of Madras. Mr. Nair said the refugees came by fibre-glass boat from Pesalai on Sri Lanka's northwestern Mannar Island. Refugee relief worker S.C. Chandrasekaran told Reuters six more refugees had arrived by boat in Tamil Nadu Wednesday. He said the 21 Tamils who landed Thursday came in a Sri Lankan boat.

Features

Bedouins excel at tracking for Israel's army

By Scheherazade Faramarzi
Associated press

SHIBLI, Israel — The bedouin weather the disdain of many fellow Arabs for their willingness to work with Israel's Jewish majority. That's especially so for those who proudly wear uniforms of the Israeli army.

Hundreds of bedouin serve in the army as trackers, combing Israel's borders for evidence of infiltrators or land mines. Their skill at finding and interpreting almost-indistinguishable traces — first perfected as shepherds — has made them an indispensable part of Israel's high-tech army.

It's a skill only they can master, the bedouin say.

The art of tracking is "passed on from father to son, one generation to another," says Tala Shibli, whose 20-year-old son, Ashraf, a tracker in the Israeli army, was killed in June by Arab infiltrators in the Jordan Valley.

The senior Shibli himself was an army tracker for 12 years. His uncle died in 1971 in the Sinai Desert, then under Israeli control, when his patrol was attacked while tracking infiltrators from Egypt.

Ashraf Shibli was the 10th resident of this village of 2,700 — all from the Shibli clan — to die in the line of duty since the 1967 Mideast war. About 20 from the village, on the slopes of Mount Tabor in lower Galilee, have been disabled.

Ashraf was buried with full military honours in the village cemetery. The commander of the Israeli army's central command, Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan, praised him for "defending his country with his life."

Israeli Jews do three years' compulsory service in the army. Israeli Arabs are not conscripted, and few of them volunteer. However, many of the bedouin do volunteer, and most serve as trackers.

Working on foot, in open-sided jeeps, or in helicopters, they scour the ground for traces of infiltration — footprints, bandprints, broken twigs, flattened grass, overturned stones.

Experienced trackers can tell how recently a track was made and how much the infiltrator weighed and detect any special characteristics such as a limp. They can ferret out freshly concealed mines and spot tricks such as someone crawling or walking backward to suggest they were heading the other way.

Even as he mourns his son, Tala Shibli, who now works as a hospital nurse, extols

the art of tracking.

"It's in our tradition, our blood," he says. "We learned it as children. In the old days, the bedouin took care of cows and goats. If one of them got lost in the hills, they could find them by the tracks. We are experts at this and it's an invaluable asset for the army."

It is hard to believe the young men of Shibli know much about cows and goats. Far removed from the traditional bedouin setting of goat-hair tents and shepherds leading their herds to graze in the hills, the village is little different from surrounding Jewish towns. Its residents drive modern cars, party at discos and attend universities in nearby Jewish towns.

More than 120,000 bedouin — formerly a nomadic people — live in Galilee in northern Israel and the Negev Desert in the south. Over the years most have settled in towns and villages.

Ali Shibli, head of the local council, says the number of bedouin youths joining the army is increasing every year. Some have reached officer rank; at least one is a lieutenant colonel.

Speaking in his office, its walls adorned with photos of Israeli leaders and a menorah, the seven-branched candelabra that serves as the emblem of the state of Israel, Ali Shibli expresses pride in the good relations between the bedouin and the government.

The bedouin act as a "bridge between Jews and Arabs," he declares.

He concedes the bedouin's close relations with the Jews mean they are not completely trusted by fellow Arabs, who have not forgotten that some bedouin — including those of Shibli — fought on the side of the Jews in the 1948 war of independence. But he rejects the notion the bedouin betrayed the Arabs.

"We are Arabs more than any Arab," he says angrily.

He brushes aside Arab criticisms that bedouin villages lag behind Jewish towns in housing, roads, schools and other benefits.

"We don't feel money is the basis for equality," he says. "What we need is to occupy important posts, to have people in the army, the government."

"Confidence cannot be bought with money; we have to gain their trust. The best way to gain the confidence is to serve in the army."

Government, Parliament deadlocked over bread price

(Continued from page 1)

legislature to the ongoing extraordinary session does not include such a topic in the agenda.

However, Mr. Kabariti accepted the challenge and offered to include the topic in the agenda with confidence that his government could muster enough votes to reject a no-confidence motion if presented.

At Saturday's meeting in Irbid, Mr. Kabariti reaffirmed that the government's decision to change the form of subsidy for bread and fodder came after thorough studies of the financial and economic situation of the country and the deficit in the fiscal budget.

Observers point out that the decision to increase the price of bread and partially lift the subsidies should have been taken several years ago, but consecutive governments refrained from doing so if only not to undermine popularity.

In his comments on Saturday, Mr. Kabariti, an economist himself, conceded that the decision was not in the interests of the popularity of his government, but that the executive authority had no choice but to adopt the move to protect the national interests of the country.

"The government was motivated by a sense of national responsibility despite the fact that such decisions harm any government's popularity," said Mr. Kabariti. "The government

is determined to place the higher national interests above all other considerations," he added in his address at the conclusion of a rally held near Irbid during an inspection tour of the Wasatieh district.

"The government has studied the question of subsidies in a scientific and objective manner and we have decided on the cash subsidy providing each citizen JD 1.28 to offset the increase in the bread prices," noted the prime minister.

He said that Jordanian citizens have 45 days to apply for the compensation, which could be paid directly by the ministry's supply departments, through banks and various private institutions.

"The government has instructed the minister of supply to tighten inspection and control over prices and to flush out those who are trying to manipulate the situation," said Mr. Kabariti, stressing that the government's objective is to help the country become self-reliant.

Mr. Kabariti also said the government was trying to reopen Arab markets for Jordan's agricultural products, noting that some of these markets were closed in the wake of the Gulf war.

He said that the government was also trying to find employment to Jordanian citizens abroad, adding that large numbers of Jordanians have been contracted this year to work in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries.

Meanwhile the Royal

Decree issued Saturday endorsing the regulations on subsidies for wheat and fodder said that:

Cash subsidy for wheat:

1. These regulations are to take effect as of July 23, 1996

2. Direct or indirect subsidy for wheat will be provided in accordance with the Cabinet's instructions.

3. Direct cash subsidy for wheat will be provided to each citizen at the rate of JD 1.28 a month. Beneficiaries of the National Aid Fund will receive JD 2.8 a month. Concerned departments are to carry out these regulations. The subsidy is to be paid from allocations in the annual fiscal budget

4. Jordanian public and other firms can provide the cash subsidy to their employees instead of the state treasury (under specified arrangements).

5. Citizens holding temporary Jordanian passports can benefit from this subsidy.

6. The Council of Ministers can adopt any other related decision upon recommendations from the minister of finance.

Subsidy on animal feed:

1. These regulations take effect from July 23, 1996

2. Stockbreeders owning up to 100 heads of sheep will receive direct cash subsidy at the rate of JD 6 for each head. The subsidy will be paid out of allocations in the fiscal budget

3. The Cabinet can adopt any related decision concerning upon recommendations from the minister of finance.

on Saturday after arriving two days earlier for surprise talks with Egyptian officials, Israel Radio reported.

Mr. Mubarak urged Mr. Netanyahu on Friday to lift the crippling closure of the autonomous Palestinian territories. "The president said he had appealed to Mr. Netanyahu to lift the blockade and to start the final phase of negotiations," the government daily Al Akhbar said Saturday.

to deny the Palestinians their rights.

"The meeting... will discuss the changing political face of the region and the nature of the new Israeli government, especially its attempts to carve up and squander the rights of the Palestinians," Mr. Hussein said on arrival at Cairo airport.

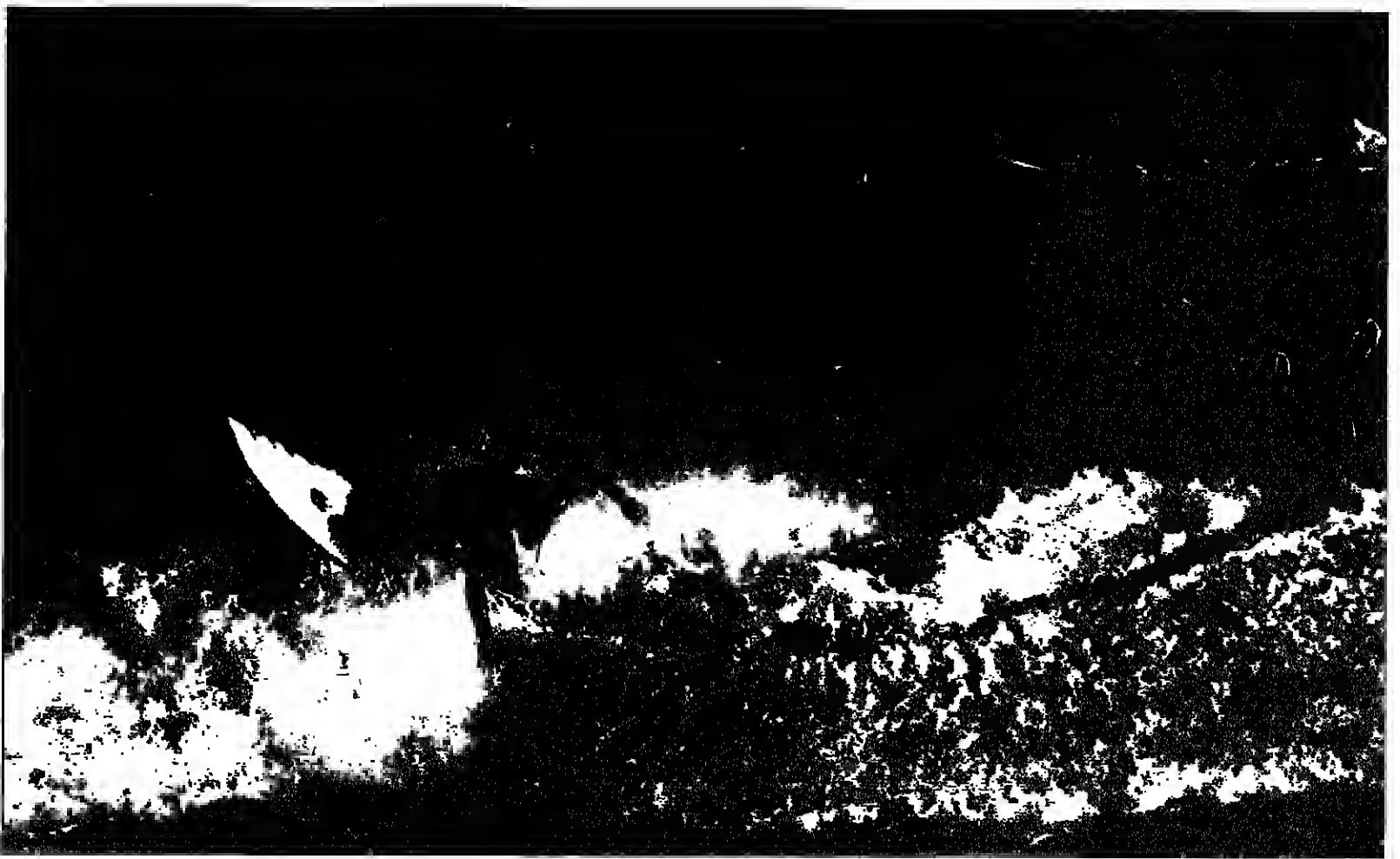
Dore Gold, the top political adviser to Mr. Netanyahu, was still in Cairo

Arafat

(Continued from page 1)

which brought together officials from the self-rule areas and from the diaspora.

Earlier, Fateh member and senior Palestinian official in Jerusalem Faisal Al Hussein said the Cairo meeting would also try to find ways to face what he said were attempts by Mr. Netanyahu



SURFERS AT BONDI BEACH DURING WINTER: A surfer rides a wave as others look on at Sydney's famous Bondi Beach on a cold and windy winter's day. Surfers are enjoying near-epic winter waves this year, whilst snow skiers are facing one of the worst seasons in memory (Reuters photo)

Winter awakens skiers and big wave hunters

By James Regan
Reuters

SYDNEY — Australian skiers faced one of the worst starts to the snow season this winter, while surfers had the time of their lives.

Australia has long held an image overseas as a surfer's paradise, where warm Pacific Ocean swells pound its shores and bronzed surfers litter its beaches.

But Australia is less recognised for its snow skiing, despite a local industry supported by more than 600,000 skiers.

No figures are kept on how much Australians spend on skiing each year, although retailers hope for a successful repeat of 1995, a bumper year for snow and sales of ski gear.

But a lack of natural snow at the start of the season had many of the mountain resorts and ski retailers sweating. Snow-making

machines were worked overtime to compensate for mother nature, but skiers say it's just not the same.

Mannie Ford of Inski in Sydney shrugged off the concerns, claiming early starts to the season in the past two years have spoiled Australian skiers. Typically its mid-July before the snows come, Ford told Reuters.

This year it was more like August.

In the popular snowy mountains, 600 kilometres south of Sydney, the poor snow conditions left some resorts short of cooks and chefs for the high season.

The resorts mostly rely on youths, attracted by prospects of plenty of free time to ski, to fill their seasonal jobs.

"The season has been slow to start, which has created a lot of job vacancies," said Clare Neumeyer, manager of the Cooma Commonwealth Employment

Service which covers the resorts.

"The moment it snows we get inundated with inquiries and people are expected to start immediately," Neumeyer said.

The snow season in Australia starts around July and typically closes in early October, but it could be extended this year if more snow arrives late. Nothing would make Australian ski resorts and lodge owners happier.

Despite the often patchy conditions, more people than ever are expected to go skiing in Australia in 1996, said Kim Clifford, manager of the Thredbo Alpine Village Resort.

At least at some resorts, reliance on snow-making machines and a variety of alternative activities, such as golf, tennis and shopping, are keeping numbers up this winter, Clifford said.

"About eight years ago, when the resorts were not

operating major snow-making equipment, it would have been pretty awful," he said.

But not everyone complains about the lack of snow. Thousands of Sydney surfers are enjoying epic waves this winter.

"The surf's been up and that means more surfboard sales," said Dominic Bird, manager of the Surflection Surf Shop.

While the surfing-like sport of snowboarding traditionally pares the number of Australian surfers in the water in July and August, many this year are sticking to the shoreline.

"I'd hate to be in the ski business this year," said Terry Fitzgerald, managing director of Hot Buttered Surfboards.

Stuart Entwistle, the 1988 world longboard surfing champion, said: "It's been a great winter for surf, with some classic days."

Dedicated surfers pay no

mind to the "no lifeguards on duty" signs posted on Sydney beaches in winter, choosing to brave the unprotected waters to surf waves often reminiscent of Hawaii that pound the shores this time each year.

Specially-designed "Big Gun" surfboards are required in these dangerous but exhilarating conditions. Sydney surfers have a saying for the dark, booming swells: "Winter... Ahh, real waves."

Some forego jobs, spouses or relationships in search of the ultimate ride. The winter swells attract top-class surfers from around the world to ride breaks with names such as "Shark Island", "No-Man's Land" and "Long Reef".

Hard-core skiers on the other hand, usually head for New Zealand, which in July resembles America's Vermont in February.

WWW — once obscure, now mainstream

By Evan Ramstad
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Few people knew anything about the World Wide Web two years ago. Now it's the most important force in computing, poised to profoundly influence society for years.

It began in 1989 as a tool scientists used for collegial communication, then gained mass appeal in 1994 after a breakthrough made it simple to use.

In the United States and other computer-saturated countries, gangly "http://" web addresses are now ubiquitous postscripts in advertising, news stories and packaging.

Thousands of companies, many quite small, have formed to put information on the web, transforming it into an enormous electronic library where data on almost anything can be found — as long as you have a personal computer.

But a new stage in web evolution is emerging. The first financial transactions are happening with people buying books, CDs, plane tickets and even stocks on the web.

With so much development momentum, the web in a decade or so may be so common that people won't think about it. Like the phone system on which it relies, the web will just be there.

The web is nothing more than a universal agreement on a way that one computer can display data from a second and then jump to data from a third, fourth and so on without complex commands.

That notion of easily linking data, regardless of a computer's type or location, can change the way people create and organise information. It's leading some businesses and institutions to rethink how they function.

The web cannot now be relied on to transfer the trillions of dollars that flow daily through banks, corporations and governments. But in time, some believe society's most complex structures, such as the stock trading and representative government, will be altered by the web.

The first big changes have been in the technology industry.

Firms that didn't have web-related products a year ago, now do.

Even computer games have been modified so a player can record a favourite move and place it on a web site, where other fans can talk about it.

Media firms and other companies that produce information have found the web is a way to reach customers. Dozens of new magazines and newsletters circulate only on the web.

The web was born when Tim Berners-Lee, a programmer at the European particle physics laboratory, conceived the technical standard that allows data to be linked. It began to take off in early 1994 after a programme called Mosaic, created by University of Illinois students, gave the web a graphical look and simpler commands.

Initially, information published on the web had to be written with special programmes to create the electronic links. Now, ordinary word processing, drawing and spreadsheet programmes have been modified to create the links.

The next wave of innovation is centered on weaving animation, sound and video into web documents. Sun Microsystems Inc. Created a programming language called java that has fostered these improvements.

A technique has been developed for sound, such as a radio broadcast or concert, to be heard via a web page the moment it is happening. The quality is only fair but developers are making progress. Faster connections, such as cable tv lines, will help.

It has even become possible to deliver a video signal through the web, though the picture is jerky. That also will improve with more development and faster connections. A few companies like Vocaltec Inc. are adapting audio and video technology for conferencing online.

Such progress sounds nice though impractical right now for most people. But it is very important to companies with complex data systems.

Connections in corporate networks are faster than phone lines that most people at home use to connect to the Internet and web. That makes advances in web technology practical in corporate settings.

More important, web technical standards reduce the difference between computers. Information

produced for a web page can be used equally well on an IBM-compatible PC, Apple Macintosh or engineering workstation.

Most companies have a variety of computers. Before web specifications became entrenched, it was inefficient to share information among them. The term "intranet" is used to describe corporate data systems that adopt web technical standards, overcoming design barriers of divergent machines.

By sharing information regardless of the type or location of computer, organisations can change how they work. Federal Express Corp., for example, takes package orders and pickup requests over its web site, saving money because customers make fewer calls to its toll-free phone line.

"I think the recognition of potential is extremely broad" in large companies, said Butch Winters, president of Internet and New Media Business at Electronic Data Systems Corp., a huge computer services and consulting firm.

But, he added, they don't have "meaningful criteria to measure the impact."

"Once you open up a shared or collaborative space, you provide context for discussion of issues that, previously, folks lower down in an organisation weren't privy to," said Chris Newell, the managing director of the Lotus Institute, run by the Lotus Development Corp. software company.

Even though the web has become mass-marketed, it remains inaccessible to most people.

Cost is the big issue for many consumers. In September, Sony and Philips will sell a \$200-\$300 device that lets people interact with the web using a TV. Other companies are racing to do the same.

For Sony executive Jim Bonan, the reason to make such a product lies with what he sees as the web's paradox: "Never has something gotten so much attention while remaining a mystery to such a vast group of people."

Arab states eye free trade zone

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab states are trying to remove customs barriers among them for the first time in line with a summit decision that could turn them into one of the largest economic blocs in the world.

Arab League officials said the nucleus of the region's first free trade zone would materialise in 1997 and the project would come into fruition in 10 years as recommended by Arab leaders during their June 21 summit in Cairo.

"The free trade zone will be established within 10 years. Procedures for such a zone will be implemented in 1997," said Abdul Rahman Al Subaibani, Arab League assistant secretary general for economic affairs.

"A timetable will be drawn up for the gradual removal of customs tariffs on all goods. We expect all goods to be liberalised in 10 years," he told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) economic weekly Emirates Today.

Arab states have consid-

ered setting up a free trade zone over the past two decades but the project faltered because of political differences and a tendency by most members to protect their burgeoning industries.

Most of the Arab League's 22 members signed an agreement in early 1970s to facilitate internal trade but only a few of them have complied.

Political rifts have combined with customs barriers and other factors to keep trade among Arab countries below 10 per cent of their total trade.

Official figures showed inter-Arab exports stood at \$12.7 billion in 1994 compared with their total exports of around \$134.1 billion. Internal imports of nearly \$10.1 billion were also a fraction of the total Arab imports of around \$115.3 billion.

The low commercial exchange have prompted the Arab Monetary Fund (AMF), the League's main financial institution, to set up a \$500 million fund to finance trade transactions among member states. But

the fund has failed to lift such exchange as political disputes and customs barriers persisted.

AMF officials said they believed a free trade zone was essential for Arab economic integration and the long-sought common market.

"How could you embark on setting up a common Arab market when national goods are subject to high tariffs in the other members," one official asked.

The AMF, a regional IMF-style organisation, is one of the League's bodies involved in the establishment of the free zone, which was proposed after most Arab countries cast aside their disagreements at the Cairo summit to be united by headline attitudes by the new right-wing Israeli government.

Economists believe tackling political rifts is an important step towards creating a free zone. They cited border disputes within the Gulf Cooperation Council as an example of how politics could hinder economic moves.

Mr. Subaibani said the new agreement for the free zone stipulated that "no member state should issue any legislation that could impede the project."

He said the zone would take into consideration the rules endorsed by the World Trade Organisation for creating a worldwide free zone. They involve measures to counter subsidies and tackle any balance of payment deficit that could be inflicted on any member because of the free zone programme.

"The zone project will be discussed by the Arab economy and social affairs ministers during talks in Alexandria on Sept. 18," he said.

Experts said an Arab free zone would give birth to a major economic and consumer bloc, with annual trade of around \$250 billion and a gross domestic product of more than \$500 billion. The region also sits atop more than 60 per cent of the world's oil and 20 per cent of the gas.

Major U.S. firms likely to get big projects in Jordan soon

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Contrary to media reports, serious consultations are under way between the government and several American multinationals on energy and power projects to Jordan and concrete results of the deliberations are expected to be unveiled soon, according to Jordanian officials and diplomats.

At least six American companies are seriously considering setting up a 250-megawatt power plant in southern Jordan at an estimated cost of more than \$350 million.

The project could be a build, own and operate or build, operate and transfer basis — meaning that the entire investment will be from the private sector, both Jordanian and foreign, and the project will be operated as a concession from the government.

In addition to meeting local needs, a good part of the plant's output is expected to be bought by Israel.

Stuart Eizenstat, undersecretary of the U.S. Department of Commerce, confirmed last week that Israeli Infrastructure Minister Ariel Sharon had expressed keen interest in buying the output of the plant.

He also affirmed that American firms were interested in the project and serious discussions were under way.

With the expected completion of an expansion project at the Aqaba Thermal Power Plant to raise the installed capacity by 260 megawatts, most of the Jordanian requirement is expected to be met and almost the

entire output of the proposed 250-megawatt plant could be sold, according to energy experts.

Another proposed project is a \$2.2 billion refinery with an installed capacity to process 250,000 barrels of crude oil. An American group signed a letter of intent in June to undertake the project, but it failed to meet a contract obligation to provide a bank guarantee as a pre-condition before being granted the project.

Reports of the failure of the company dismayed many Jordanians, but officials and diplomats said another firm had come forward to take the project and several other options were also available to the government.

In a meeting with the Jordanian Businessmen Association and the Jordan Trade Association, Mr. Eizenstat brushed aside the failure of the first company and said that regardless of everything the project is expected to be finalised soon. The project, he added, will generate 7,000 to 10,000 direct and another 10,000 indirect job opportunities for Jordanians.

Another major infrastructure project in Aqaba is the proposed expansion of the airport there to serve as a regional facility that will initially serve Jordan and Israel.

The Trade and Development Agency, an arm of the U.S. government, financed a feasibility study on the expansion of the airport with a \$500,000 grant.

Israeli Prime Minister Beoramin Netanyahu, in comments to the press after talks with His Majesty King Hussein in Amman on Monday, dismissed as unfounded reports that his government was abandoning the airport expansion project despite an agreement signed with Jordan last year.

He said the reports, which said Mr. Sharoo, his infrastructure minister, opposed the project, were totally untrue. On the contrary, he said, the project had the support of the minister.

The expanded airport will have a Jordanian and an Israeli terminal and a feasibility study is expected to establish the best mechanism to carry out the expansion and operate the facility without taxing the treasury.

Talks are also continuing on a terminal at Aqaba to store liquefied gas. The \$300 million terminal will be built by the U.S. Enron Corporation from Qatar and sent to Israel through a pipeline. Israel and the government of Qatar have signed separate agreements with Enron in this regard.

HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, AUGUST 11, 1996

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Avoid outside activities today, which could disappoint you and thereby you will not be concerned over anything you can do nothing about. Study your status quo and plan to improve it for the better with great success.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 21) Forget old ideas today and find out what your mate expects of you and get five results for your efforts in the days ahead. Later this evening you can meet with some interesting new person and discuss your career activities.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) An outside fellow associate can be of assistance to you even though a close friend can confuse you immensely concerning some project you are involved in at this time. Tonight you can meet with a bigwig and have a discussion.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Avoid that outsider today who can cause you to get confused on some important career activities and you should consult a knowledgeable fellow associate who has the answers to your questions you have at this time.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) If you have any vital letters to write today, the evening is best to accomplish this. Get into the privacy of your study or office for best results and thereby you can gain the prestige which is important to you and your loved ones.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Forget amusements today and get your home in better condition so that you can entertain close friends. Take time later this evening to study your property and improve it so that you can increase its value.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Avoid situations today at home which you do not approve of and you can make it more harmonious. Later this evening entertain your friends at this time and you can make your career activities more successful.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be careful when driving on the highway today and especially of others you come in contact with at this time. Study your financial status and think how to improve it for that time when you discover you could be short of funds.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Concentrate on long-wished-for goals today and come up with a plan of action which will make them a reality. Be with a group of close friends tonight and have a nice evening in their company and have some fun.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to Jan. 20) Gain good suggestions today from a trusted advisor who has some ideas which can make your career activities more successful. Later this evening is fine for planning next week's activities and come up with a game plan.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Forget anxiety at this time and go see good friends who can have plans for some recreations which will be fun. Turn a recent acquaintance with some knowledgeable person into an alliance which provide you with prosperity.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Avoid an older person today who can disturb you and does not allow you the opportunity to concentrate up career activities for the days ahead. Study how to make big headway next week and plan a new course of action.

Birthstone of August: Peridot — Golden

Asia's oil demand forecast to surge 4.5-5.5 per cent

SINGAPORE (AFP) — Asia's oil demand will surge 4.5 to 5.5 per cent this year from 18 million barrels per day (mbd) in 1995 on the back of rising consumption in China and India, according to results of a survey.

The combined 4.8 mbd of China and India, the world's two most populous nations, will rise by more than eight per cent, said the Asian oil annual 1997 Survey covering 13 key markets in the region.

Results of the survey were published by the Singapore Oil Report, a monthly journal devoted to the oil business, which said the continued surge in regional demand made for record oil trade in Singapore in the first half of the year.

South Korea, despite a slowdown in recent years, is still expected to add about six per cent to its two mbd appetite and Indone-

sia's consumption is projected to rise nine to 10 per cent to around 920,000 barrels per day in 1996, it said. Indonesia is expected to become next year the fifth member of Asia's mbd club which so far comprises Japan, China, South Korea and India, it said.

China, India, South Korea and Indonesia have together seen their share of the Asian crude oil and oil products market rise from 37.7 per cent in 1990 to 43 per cent last year.

"In absolute terms, they would have raised their consumption by around three mbd to a projected 8.4 mbd between 1990 and 1996," the Singapore Oil Report said.

"These growth rates have captured the attention of investors, with the result that most refinery projects in the region in recent years have been aimed at meeting the needs of the four coun-

tries," it said.

Thailand and Malaysia, aiming to become the next "tiger" economies, were projected to see oil consumption rise 10-12 per cent this year to 650,000 barrels per day and 380,000 barrels per day respectively.

Vietnam, the smallest of the markets surveyed, was tipped to post 9.5-10.5 per cent growth in oil demand to 89,000 barrels per day.

By year-end, Asia would have added around 4.8 mbd to its 1990 consumption base of 14.6 mbd, raising its share of the global market from 21 per cent to 26 per cent, the Singapore Oil Report said.

"If its average annual consumption growth rate of five per cent of 1990-95 is maintained, Asia could overtake North America as the world's largest regional market by early next decade," it said.

The report surveyed the

oil outlook in Japan, China, South Korea, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Vietnam and Australia.

Except for the mature markets of Japan, Australia and Singapore, oil consumption was forecast to continue growing strongly in the regional markets.

Along with their oil consumption, the refining capacity of the 13 countries is expected to rise significantly, the report said.

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE Daily Crossword by Virginia B. Hopewell

ACROSS
1 Grimaldians
5 Municipal
10 Humane org.
14 Indian
15 Betel palm
18 Very long time period

17 Pertaining to the ear
18 Elector
19 Domesticated
20 White-maned horse
22 Straight and — path
24 — me tangere
25 Prime donna
26 Bearlike mammal

29 Camelion
34 Crown-ups
37 Cupid
37 Mai
38 Woman
39 Horatio
41 Move suddenly

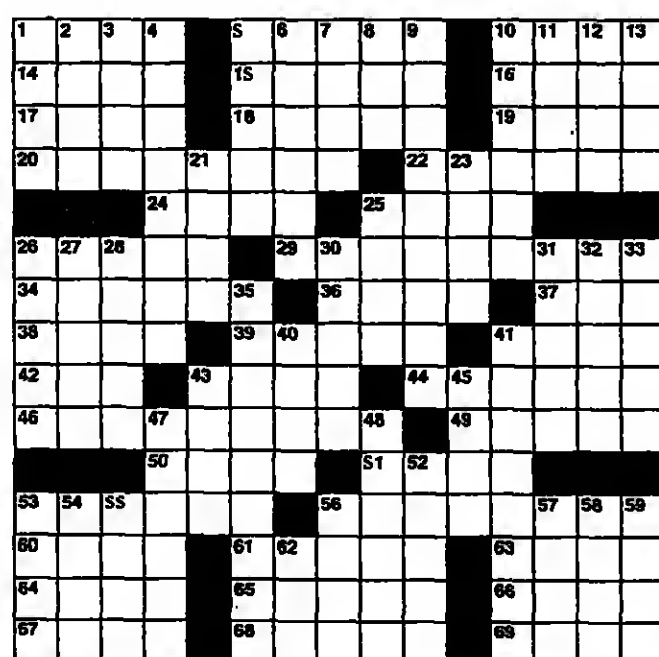
42 Comp. pt.
43 Jai
44 Grommet
46 Don Quixote's horse
49 Deep gulf
50 Portend
51 Actor Robert De

53 Straw
56 Obduracy
60 Vice squad operation
61 Poplar tree
63 Arabian port
64 Alt
65 Asian land
66 Brainchild
67 Math subj.
68 Signets

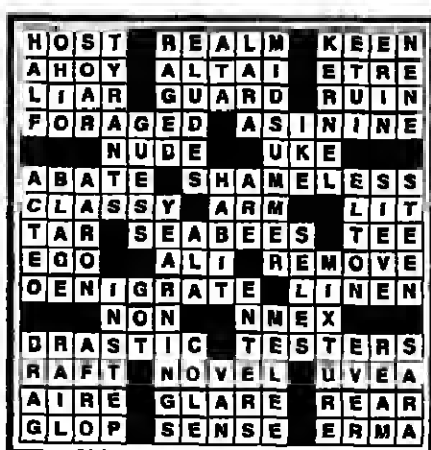
69 Sloping walkway
DOWN
1 Chicken house
2 — boy
3 Drudgery
4 Following, in a way
5 Raise trivial objections

6 Incongruous, in a way
7 President's prerogative
8 Cube material
9 Meat eater
10 Petty ruler
11 Bartlett or Bosc
12 Crooner Perry
13 Once more
21 Castle defense

23 Rds.
25 Artist Gustave
26 Lighter in hue
27 A Bell for —
28 Some paintings
30 Lawful
31 Padue's country
32 Nostrils
33 Saint — and Nevis
35 Youthful inexperience
40 Superman's Lois
41 Sueve



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43 Shortly
45 Livestock enclosure
47 Footnote word
48 Glossy paint
52 Actor Jeremy
53 Sailing ship
54 Facilitate
55 Hi city
56 Syrian city
57 Old Norse poetry collection
58 Appear
59 Garment fastening
62 Shelter

A review of news from the Arabic press

Mr. Abdallat said high land prices are behind the unorganised state of the real estate market and the varying rises in apartment costs. He believes that real estate investors are making less profit than before as sales of apartments are now dependent on expatriates who, according to Mr. Abdallat, have reached the "sufficiency level."

"The expatriates have moved to establish their own projects," he indicated.

“Our action is based on the refusal of the client to repay his obligations” the official said noting that the company has the capabilities to settle the debt. Mr. Tamari said the bank has refused to consider a proposal under which accountants from both sides would examine various accounts to find out a suitable solution.

Mr. Rukeithi, also general secretary of the Union of Arab Stock Exchanges and Securities Commissions, discussed the plan with acting Lebanese finance minister Fouad Siniora and Beirut Stock Exchange

Energy			* JOC Cross Rates		
Commodity	Last	Delivery	Currency	Buy	Sell
Coffee (c/lbs)	122.83	Spot	US Dollar	0.708	0.710
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1478	Spot	GB Sterling	1.0987	1.1022
Sugar (\$/ton)	385	Spot	DE Mark	0.4791	0.4815
Wheat (\$/ton)	192	Spot	CHF Franc	0.5882	0.5911
Soya (c/lbs)	24.05	Spot	FR Franc	0.1309	0.1408
Tea (slg/lb)	112	Spot	JP Yen	0.8535	0.8568
Barley (\$/sh)	3.54	Spot	NL Guilder	0.4286	0.4287
Rice (\$/ton)	425	Spot	IT Lira	0.0488	0.0488

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1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 26

Turkish premier visits Iran despite U.S. misgivings

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Turkey's pro-Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan arrived here Saturday on a three-day official visit to Iran to discuss political and economic cooperation despite intense U.S. opposition.

Mr. Erbakan, on his first foreign visit since becoming prime minister in June, was accompanied by a high-ranking delegation, including Defence Minister Turhan Tayan. He was greeted at the airport by Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi.

At a short press conference, Mr. Erbakan commenced his remarks with "In the name of God," in a marked departure from the secular tradition of modern Turkey.

He said his trip ushered in a "new era in relations" between the two Muslim neighbours. "There is a potential to expand ties in all fields and we want to boost ties more than ever."

The Turkish premier is to hold talks on Sunday with Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati. He will also meet businessmen at Iran's Chamber of Commerce.

On Monday, Mr. Erbakan is expected to attend a press conference after signing a \$20 billion deal to purchase Iranian natural gas.

His trip has sparked fierce opposition from Turkey's ally in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the United States, which is seeking to isolate Iran, accusing it of sponsoring international terrorism.

"We have made it very

clear to the Turkish government that Iran is a state that should be isolated," U.S. State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said on Tuesday. "We will watch the development of this relationship very carefully."

But Mr. Erbakan said his trip to Iran was "by no means against the United States." "Iran is a friend of Turkey and so is the United States. Our seeking better ties with Iran has nothing to do with Washington's policies and aims in the regions."

The Turkish premier said he would discuss "peace and removing tension" from the region with Iranian officials as well as bilateral cooperation in economic, commercial, technical and cultural fields.

The natural gas agreement, which extends to 2020, calls for shipping four billion cubic metres of gas a year to Turkey, and the construction of pipelines in Turkey and Iran.

The United States warned Turkey on Friday that it may face sanctions under the Iran-Libya sanctions law if it signs the deal.

But Turkish sources said the contract was not covered by the American D'Amato law since it was a bilateral agreement, not an investment.

Mr. Erbakan has so far kept on good terms with Washington. His government says its Iran deal would not come under the U.S. ban because it foresees Turkey constructing a gas pipeline on its own soil.

"You have to read the U.S. decision very carefully," a senior Turkish energy official

told Reuters. "According to this agreement, we are making investments on our own territory."

The Kurdish issue is also expected to be discussed in Tehran.

The prime minister will win points with the staunchly secular military if he manages to persuade Tehran to tighten the two countries' common border against incursions into Turkey from Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) rebels, diplomats said.

Trade between Turkey and Iran totalled some \$960 million last year, two-thirds of which was made up of Iranian exports, namely petrol.

Mr. Erbakan called on the two countries to "wipe out the problem of terrorism in the region" while Mr. Habibi called for "secure borders." Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Allaeddin Boroujerdi told AFP that a Turkish military mission had reported to Ankara after a trip on Wednesday and Thursday that it had found "no traces of PKK bases in Iran."

The team scoured the Iranian side of their common border near the northwestern lake of Orumiyeh but found no proof of rebel bases belonging to the PKK, he told AFP.

Previous Turkish governments have accused Iran and Syria of harbouring PKK rebels, who have waged a 12-year battle to establish a separate Kurdish homeland in southeast Anatolia.

Mr. Erbakan's visit to Iran is the first leg of a tour which will take him to Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia between Aug. 12 and Aug. 20.



HARE KRISHNA FOLLOWERS PARADE IN SOFIA: About 50 Bulgarian Hare Krishna followers parade through the streets of Sofia on Saturday to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of the sect's founder. It is the first such procession by the sect in Bulgaria (Reuters photo)

Syria's air force threat to Israel — Jane's

LONDON (R) — Syria's air force could pose a serious threat to Israel because of its large inventory of combat aircraft, the authoritative London-based defence publishers Jane's said on Friday.

In a report, Jane's Sentinel-Eastern Mediterranean said that while the Syrian air force lacked state-of-the-art technology, it was still capable of making a lethal strike.

"Syria has a sizeable inventory of combat aircraft and a mass attack could allow it to tie up and saturate Israel's air defences, allowing its formidable fleet of SU-24 fighter-bombers to make a damaging attack on a target such as Tel Aviv," the report said.

"It is clear that the capability of the force goes far beyond a defensive posture," it said.

Israeli sources maintained that Israel could neutralise Syria's air defence system in 48 hours, the report said.

"Israeli sources believe that parts of the (Syrian Air Forces) computerised system sometimes fail to function and then have to be operated manually," it said.

Jane's said the Syrian air force had a cumbersome battle management structure and few spare parts lacking some of the more advanced technological systems available.

"Syria has one of the most sophisticated Soviet-designed air defence systems outside of the former Eastern bloc countries."

However, it is not up to the standards of the most advanced air defence and sensor systems developed by the Soviets," it said.

"But among the Arab states of the region, Syria was pre-eminent in terms of strategic weaponry. Only Israel could claim to be more powerful in this regard."

To counter this, Syrian President Hafez Al Assad is thought to be investing heavily in a programme to increase the country's stock of weapons of mass destruction," it said.

The report also said Syria was believed to have established "Scud" missile sites in underground bunkers which would be within easy range of Israeli forces on the Golan Heights.

Pressure mounts on Croats to ditch mini-state before Geneva summit

ZAGREB (Agencies) — Pressure mounted Saturday on Bosnian Croat nationalists to agree, before a summit meeting in Geneva Wednesday, to a plan to dismantle their separatist mini-state in southern Bosnia, Croatian radio said.

The top U.S. official on Bosnia, John Kornblum, said that the plan to dismantle the Croat statelet of Herzeg-Bosnia must be finished by next Wednesday, when the Croatian, Bosnian and Serbian presidents are due to hold talks in Geneva, Croatian radio reported.

Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic told the Croatian news agency HINA the Croats had to agree the plan with Bosnian Muslims that would dismantle the mini-state they set up in 1993.

With a difference of just one day, he agreed with Mr. Kornblum.

"We are going to do everything we can to get an agreement before Wednesday or during the Geneva summit, at the latest," he said.

Herzeg-Bosnia is the name for the para-state thrown up by hardline separatist Croats in 1993 when they expelled Muslims from areas in south-western Bosnia and strove to join with Croatia proper.

Fighting ensued until Washington ordered Zagreb to put an end to it in 1994, since when Muslims and Croats have joined forces in a shaky alliance.

The Croats, who are in the minority in the federation, have been reluctant since then to ditch their mini-state, where Croatian flags fly and the currency is that used over

the official border in Croatia.

The joint front, by Washington and Zagreb, came after several hours of closed-door negotiations Saturday between Washington's envoy on the Balkans and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman on the holiday island of Brioni, off the Croatian coast, on Saturday.

The U.S. official has been in the region since Thursday attempting to lay the ground for the summit called by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

The summit comes one month to the day before Bosnia goes to the polls for the first time since war broke out in 1992.

The U.N. special envoy on human rights on Saturday slammed Croatia's treatment of its minority Serb population and warned of harassment of voters ahead of Bosnia's upcoming polls.

Elisabeth Rehn, speaking at a press conference in Sarajevo, said she was "very disappointed" with obstacles she said were being posed by Zagreb for the return of tens of thousands of Serbs who fled a Croatian army offensive last year.

The Croatian and Serbian presidents agreed in talks this week to normalise relations on August 23 with the return to Croatia of some of the tens of thousands of Serbs who fled to Serbia last year one of Serbia's key demands for the normalisation to go ahead.

An official of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said Thursday in Belgrade that Zagreb has been urged "so far

without success" to accept back the 200,000 refugees from its Krajina region.

UNHCR spokesman Marwan Al Khoury said the situation of the 170,000 Serbs who had fled to Serbia from Croatia was "worsening" with many living in refugee centres, and said Zagreb was blocking their return with administrative hurdles.

Ms. Rehn, in Sarajevo Saturday, agreed, "I am very disappointed with the fact that the return of Serbs is still very, very difficult," she said, adding that threats to the estimated 10,000 Serbs who remained in Croatia "have been increasing all the time."

The former Finnish defence minister is on a tour of former Yugoslavia and visited last week the former Krajina region of Croatia, which Croatian forces retook in August last year from Serb rebels.

Muslims, Croats fight

Bosnian Muslims and Croats fought with sticks and stones in central Bosnia on Saturday after ethnic Croats blocked a planned Muslim religious festival near the town of Maglaj, a NATO spokesman said.

"We have reports of fighting with sticks and rocks in and around Novi Seher, a few kilometres south of Maglaj," Major Brett Boudreau told Reuters. "We stopped 20 to 25 buses from moving north from Zenica to Maglaj when it became clear that an incident was in progress. At one point we had reports of as many as 200 people blocking the main road."

COLUMN 8

UAE man, 135, dies after first doctor visit

DUBAI (R) — A newspaper said Saturday United Arab Emirates' oldest man died days after his first visit to a doctor at the age of 135. Gulf News said Obaid Muharak Ben Suwaidan Bal Jafiah's health began to deteriorate a week ago. "Only then was he forced to see a doctor. He had never visited one before," it said. The former desert tracker died on Aug. 6 in Dubai. The paper said at 135 he was the oldest man in the UAE since Ali Matar Ben Ghurair died last month at 136. The Guinness Book of Records recognises Frenchwoman Jeane Calment as the oldest person in the world with a birth certificate proving she is 121.

Fergie blocks kiss-and-tell book

LONDON (R) — Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson, nicknamed "Fergie" by Britain's tabloid press, has won a court injunction preventing publication of a kiss-and-tell book about her relationship with American businessman John Bryan. The divorced wife of Prince Andrew, who four years ago was pictured cavorting topless with Mr. Bryan, was granted the injunction Friday against the proposed book, which publishers described as "an explosive account" of their relationship. Fergie's Secret Life was to have been written by Allan Starkie, a former friend of Mr. Bryan's. Mr. Bryan himself was declared bankrupt by a London court this week in an action brought by the Duchess of York's sister. Fergie has never been able to live down the worldwide publication in 1992 of pictures showing Mr. Bryan sucking her toes at a French villa shortly after her separation from Prince Andrew, Queen Elizabeth's second son.

Hungarian comes 2nd in violin competition

SION, Switzerland (AFP) — Hungarian Jozsef Lendvay took second prize in the 30th Tibor Varga International Violin Competition here but no first prize was awarded because judges felt no candidate deserved it, organisers said Saturday. Ayana Ito from Japan took third prize in the competition held from August 2 to 9, with the participation of 67 entrants from 24 countries.

China finds new diagnosis for schizophrenia

BEIJING (AFP) — Chinese psychiatrists claim that palm reading has given them another tool in the frequently hazy diagnosis of schizophrenia. Xinhua reported Wednesday. Their method does not rely on predictions of the future but a careful examination of the texture of the palms, particularly uneven creases on the palm and disordered wrinkles on finger prints. "Because the human nervous system and skin develop together, any abnormality of the nervous system should appear on the skin," said Feng Zhiyong, head of the research faculty at Tianjin Hospital. He told the news agency that results of a 10-year study of 275 schizophrenics, which used 275 healthy people as a control, found a high rate of disordered wrinkles in those who had been diagnosed schizophrenic. The rate was 40.4 per cent in females and 11.7 per cent in males compared to 2.3 per cent and 4.8 per cent in the control group. Mr. Feng said he used the method to correct the misdiagnosis of a 50-year-old patient who was classified as schizophrenic.

EU to discuss retaliation for U.S. Iran sanctions

PARIS (R) — The 15 European Union (EU) nations, strongly united against U.S. legislation to penalise foreign firms investing in Iran and Libya, will discuss possible retaliation next month, European Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan was quoted on Saturday as saying.

Mr. Brittan told the French daily Le Figaro that the EU had planned retaliation last June to U.S. sanctions, later postponed, against firms doing business with Cuba in defiance of a U.S. trade embargo.

"This text can easily be adapted to the D'Amato Law, but in this case — formal decisions have to be taken by the Council of (Foreign) Ministers in September," he said.

The so-called D'Amato Law, signed by President Bill Clinton last Monday, specifies sanctions for foreign companies making new investments of \$40 million or more in oil or gas projects in Iran or Libya which

Washington says are the world's leading state sponsors of terrorism.

The law has provoked protests by U.S. trading partners around the world, who say it violates the rights of foreign governments to make their own policy.

The EU formally protested to the U.S. State Department over the law this week, delivering a warning it would defend its rights and interests.

EU foreign ministers have given the European Commission the go-ahead to prepare retaliatory action against the D'Amato Law and a similar U.S. measure, the Helms-Burton Law, aimed at Cuba.

Mr. Brittan, a long-serving member of the EU's executive who is in charge of the bloc's trade exchanges, expressed doubt that implementation of the D'Amato Law could be postponed as the Helms-Burton Law had been.

At the most, President Clinton has a margin of

appreciation on some aspects of the law. But that flexibility is limited," he was quoted as saying.

The D'Amato Law allows Mr. Clinton to select two out of six possible sanctions or waive sanctions in certain cases, and Washington has voiced hopes that the United States and the EU could resolve the dispute through quiet diplomacy. Mr. Brittan, a former British cabinet minister, said the 15 EU partners would remain firm when they discuss concrete steps against the D'Amato Law.

"I noted at last June's Council of Ministers meeting a real unity among the 15 that I can describe as exceptional given my experience of European affairs," Mr. Brittan told Le Figaro.

"I see no reason for this unity to weaken," he added.

Non-EU countries, including Australia, Japan and Canada, have also criticised the laws.

Zeroual ends latest talks on national forum

ALGIERS (Agencies) — Algerian President Liamine Zeroual on Saturday wound up a second round of bilateral talks with opposition leaders aimed at bringing them into a nationwide political forum.

He met Sheikh Mahfoud Nahnah of the Movement of Islamic Society, who said afterwards there were still differences between his party and Mr. Zeroual. He did not, however, specify them.

Mr. Nahnah obtained 25 per cent of the vote in presidential elections last year and his party holds two ministries in the government.

The talks were the latest in series of meetings aimed at pushing for agreement on proposed reforms to hold general elections in 1997 after a referendum to amend the Algerian constitution.

The dialogue, which excludes radical Islamists, has been marred recently by a rash of bomb attacks

killing more than 20 in coffee shops and restaurants.

An estimated 50,000 people have been killed in violence since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) took a commanding lead.

Radical Islamists say there can be no solution to the violence without their participation.

On Tuesday, the Socialist Forces Front (FFS) announced it was pulling out of the talks and would not take part in the national conference, which is due to take place by the end of summer on an as yet unspecified date.

The Movement for Democracy in Algeria also hinted it will not join the forum by announcing Friday that it would not sit on commissions charged with studying political parties and amendments to electoral laws.

Three other parties have

agreed to take part in the forum as has the trade union UGTA after extracting a promise of a conference dedicated to economic and social policies afterwards.

The other three parties are the former ruling National Liberation Front, the Rally for Culture and Democracy and the Islamic Renaissance Movement.

Hachemi Cherif, leader of the former communist Front of the Movement, met the president on Thursday and conditioned his participation in the forum on Islam being derecognised as the state religion.

Mr. Zeroual began his second round of bilateral talks on August 3 after earlier meeting opposition leaders individually in April and May. He also organised a multilateral negotiations in July.

He hopes to hold a referendum on the constitution by the end of the year and legislative and local elections in early 1997.

abakan plans to

Turkey's pro-Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan arrived here Saturday on a three-day official visit to Iran to discuss political and economic cooperation despite intense U.S. opposition.

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